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MAINSTREAMED DEAF INDIVIDUALS: DESCRIPTIONS OF IDENTITY

by

RACHEL SHELLEY ROY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Special Education - Deafness Studies (Education)

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1996

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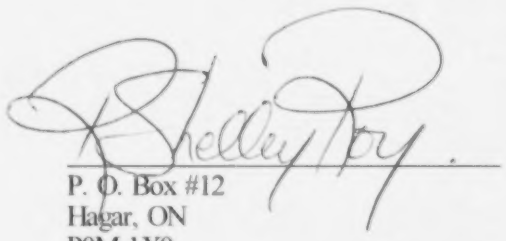

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Mainstreamed Deaf Individuals: Descriptions of Identity submitted by Rachel Shelley Roy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Special Education - Deafness Studies (Education).

Mary Ann Bibby, thesis supervisor

Michael Rodda

Lorraine Wilgosh

Ken Ward

Linda Cundy

FOR DEAF INDIVIDUALS

WHO ARE MAINSTREAMED

and

FOR MY PARENTS

Betty and Robert Roy

Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative exploration of the identity experiences of seven deaf individuals who were mainstreamed in high school. These individuals are currently attending university and were interviewed about their past high school experiences.

The participants were asked to share their experiences and perspectives on identity and they described what it was like to be a deaf student attending school with hearing students. Five common themes emerged from the data and descriptions of these themes are provided: 1) Participants' thoughts on identity, 2) Looking back at high school: The participants' perceptions of themselves, 3) Deafness as a part of self, 4) Surviving in the mainstream: The participants' coping mechanisms, and 5) Having someone to look up to: The participants' role models.

Each participant in this study faced considerable challenges as s/he encountered situations and experiences in the mainstreamed context. Recommendations for professionals, educators, the public, parents, and other mainstreamed deaf students are listed and suggestions for further research are made.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

If you wish to learn the highest truths, begin with the alphabet.
Japanese proverb

Personal Perspective and Introduction

Growing up as an individual and deaf in an all hearing family has its problems and rewards. My family adopted an oral philosophy at home where we all communicated orally. It was very interesting at the time that my family was not given any other alternatives for communication and that they went along with the inexperienced teacher's advice as the "best" there is. I went out of town to go to school in the city where mainstreamed programs were available for exceptional children. The program endorsed an oral philosophy for deaf children. It was not until many years later, at the age of fifteen, that I discovered another communication option: sign language. Three years after my initial exposure to sign language, I learned American Sign Language at Gallaudet University. Since then, I primarily use American Sign Language for communication and use my not-so-perfect speech skills with hearing people who do not know sign language.

I have struggled with my deafness for a long time but this was heightened during my adolescent years when my deafness made a great impact on me and my sense of who I was. I became disillusioned with who I was. For several years, I considered myself a hearing person with a hearing problem. I could not accept the possibility that I could be a deaf person. The major influence of this was from one teacher at my high school. She encouraged us to be the best individual we can and yet, at the same time she minimized the importance that deafness played in our lives. The effect of this was that I felt I was abnormal if I did not wear my hearing aid every day, did not use an FM system at school, and did not speak.

Looking back at high school, I remember vividly the experiences I had. Many were naturally unpleasant, especially the social experiences. I was not included, nor part of, the group of hearing peers and I felt they were quietly belittling me behind my back; some had made fun of me in my presence. I became helpless and livid when I could not break the invisible social barriers. I desperately wanted to be accepted at any level with hearing people, even if it meant being with hearing people with low educational achievements. I wanted to be

with a hearing person. This went so far as to where I was not even interested in forming relationships with other deaf people in that school, because in my view, the hearing students were treating other deaf people negatively and also, the other deaf students were not happy with their deafness.

However, at home I was a totally different person. I did not appear to question much about myself in the light of who I was. I was loved for who I was. I felt I was a daughter of my parents, a sister to my siblings and a cousin to my cousins, a niece to my relatives and a granddaughter of grandparents. But there were moments when they did not understand the delicate "fine points" of my being deaf. How could they? All in all, my family accepted me as an unique individual.

By sheer luck, I heard about Gallaudet University from a stranger and it intrigued me enough to check it out. Later I found out that my teacher of the deaf had other ideas for me. She was crestfallen to learn that I was going to Gallaudet University and admitted openly that it may be a waste for me to go there. I think it was then and there that I realized how much I needed to find out for myself and to find out who I was. I was firmly determined to find out what Deaf culture meant and was even more amazed and appalled that my teacher did not know anything of it.

My four years at Gallaudet University had taught me more about myself than I could ever possibly imagine. It changed my whole perspective of everything. It taught me that I am an individual in my own right with many notable accomplishments. I learned to be proud of myself being Deaf and all that it encompasses. Being in the environment where deafness was the norm, it encouraged me to view deafness in a creative way. The best feeling of all was that I felt whole and complete, now that my personal, social and Deaf qualities had intertwined into one whole being. It is analogous to making a sum of all connecting parts. I knew things would never be the same afterwards. Gradually, I perceived the world with new eyes. That was one of the most crucial and liberating turning points of my life.

I have observed and discussed the issue of identity with many deaf people in various geographic locations in the United States and in Canada. It surprised me to learn that other deaf people were on similar quests of seeking higher truths about themselves. I was struck by the similarities between my experiences and those of others. It was a nice welcoming change. They contributed further to my understanding of deafness and how it affects identity. It also piqued my interest to learn if there were others who did not need to go through such an

extensive search of themselves and if so, why not. From there, a growing interest on this issue finally became a topic to investigate scientifically.

My reason for choosing this study was to supplement the existing, albeit, little data about identity and mainstreamed deaf individuals. Mainstreamed deaf people do not have great opportunities to know about and to get to know deaf adults and the Deaf community, and to know how their future is taking hold. Increased understanding and knowledge about other deaf people's experiences in establishing a realistic self-identity should assist all deaf individuals in understanding who they are and reaching their full potential of who they are.

Research has focused mainly on the factors for successful integration in schools, academic achievements, oral and manual communication issues, and coping strategies. Deaf adolescents and adults were seldom seen as being a part of the educational process in the mainstreaming environment. Furthermore, there is no research that presents a focus on the deaf individuals' perspectives on identity. My research will provide a greater awareness on identity and its meaning among deaf persons in a mainstreamed environment.

The purpose of this investigation is to explore and describe the perspectives on identity among deaf individuals who have been mainstreamed. Seven deaf individuals from different geographic locations in Canada participated in interviews. Their experiences, perspectives, and stories provide the basis for this thesis.

General Background to Mainstreaming, Deaf Culture, and Identity

A staggering ninety percent of deaf children come from hearing families. Most of them enrol in mainstreamed programs in elementary and high schools in their hometown (Moores, 1987; Schein, Mallory, & Greaves, 1991). Schildroth (1988) reported through a nationwide United States annual survey that at least seventy percent of all deaf individuals are mainstreamed and have received special educational services. Although there are no current statistics of deaf individuals in Canada receiving special educational services in a mainstreamed environment, the United States survey results can be inferred roughly for the Canadian mainstreamed deaf students. Importantly, the survey indicates an increase in the enrolment of deaf students into the mainstreamed environment for the past ten years and predicts an increase of deaf students in the mainstreamed environment in the future (Schildroth, 1988). This finding may be very similar to the mainstreaming situation among

deaf students in Canada.

Surprisingly, many mainstreamed deaf individuals have little if any contact with or access to the Deaf community until their adult years (Foster, 1988; Holcomb, 1993; Moores, 1987; Padden & Humphries, 1988). This may be attributed to the fact that many regular teachers and principals working with deaf children are unaware of the existence of the Deaf community, the role it plays in the lives of deaf people, and the resources it offers (Moores, 1987). Also, parents of deaf children may not be aware of the significant role the Deaf community plays. Judging from the available evidence on the lack of contact or the minimal contact with the Deaf community, we see that the mainstreamed deaf students are not gaining the full access to the community. Or more importantly one might ask: is it imperative for mainstreamed deaf adolescents to be aware of and be directly involved with the various activities in the community of Deaf people?

From my experience, when mainstreamed deaf adults do come into meaningful contact with the Deaf community for the first time and thereafter, they learn more about themselves, and they wish they had the exposure while they were younger so they could maintain the contact throughout their lives. Holcomb (1993) remarks on the relationship a deaf person develops with the Deaf community regardless of the type of educational and family background:

> ...it is not surprising to learn that the majority of deaf people elect to be members of the Deaf community. The Deaf community provides its members with a sense of belonging that they do not obtain elsewhere. Within the Deaf community, deaf people develop a sense of normalcy that they rarely feel elsewhere. They are recognized and respected for their abilities and seen as equals. (p. 43)

Much has been written about mainstreaming as an educational placement, general identity development, and deafness from a medical perspective. However, the areas are largely independent of each other. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research literature on the combination of all three facets which can be found in one study. Furthermore, there has been very little research aimed at the understanding of what deaf adolescents and adults mean when they speak about identity within the mainstreamed context.

Existing literature on general mainstreaming and deaf students focuses on the theoretical and in some cases, empirical issues: the factors for effective mainstreaming placement, types of educational support services, social and emotional development of deaf students, social skills training, mental health interventions, career education and transition from

school to work. For instance, the topics may cover issues such as how to improve the social and academic experiences for deaf individuals in mainstreaming educational setting (Lee & Antia, 1992; Leigh & Stinson, 1991; Moores, 1987; Mullen, 1986), and how to encourage positive self-concept/self-esteem in deaf individuals (Grimes & Prickett, 1988; Warren & Hasenstab, 1986; Yachnik, 1986). Most studies are quantitative in nature. There are four studies (Foster, 1988; Foster, 1989; Foster & Brown, 1988; Mertens, 1989) conducted qualitatively on the deaf students' social and academic experiences within the high school. These studies will be explored in-depth in the literature review section found in Chapter Two.

The following section provides a description of identity, adolescents, Deaf culture, Deaf identity and educational placement for purposes of information and clarification to those readers who may be unfamiliar with the terminology and deaf people.

Identity

The nature of identity is important as is "the fact that the impact of deafness per se on an individual can never be measured in isolation but only within the context of complex social variables" (Moores, 1987, p. 167).

I have chosen to undertake this research from the following framework. Erikson (1980), who first explored the concept of identity, describes identity in this way: "it is a psychosocial entity; a product of individual factors unique to the individual combined with experiential factors derived from social factors" (p. 109). In other words, identity is a sense of unique individuality. Fitts (1971) suggested that the sense of "Who am I" is "...the labels and symbols assigned to the self by the individual to describe himself and establish [an] identity" (p. 14). More clearly, Hewitt (1989) claims that "people who have identity...know who they are, what they are doing and where they are going" (p. 152).

For purposes of my research, identity becomes the personal perspective of "Who am I"; how an individual defines him/herself.

Identity and adolescents.

Identity formation is cultivated internally and externally in an interactive manner throughout the lifespan of an individual. Adolescence is an important transitional phase where one prepares to assume adult roles (Erikson, 1980; Mitchell, 1992). Likewise, it is the time of biological and sociological changes. Teenagers at this stage are exploring who they are and

how they fit within the larger society. The process of exploring oneself is universal among adolescents.

Erikson (1968) describes the healthy identity process where formation is forged in four different periods of human lifespan. They are: identifications with significant others (childhood), role diffusion (early adolescence), role experimentation (adolescence), and achievement of identity (adulthood). These four stages allow the person to resolve potential conflicts and make sense of him/herself. In each stage, the individual confronts and resolves crisis. The nature of crisis may differ among the stages.

During crisis, Erikson (1968) explains that the adolescent is struggling with him/herself which may result in identity diffusion. He states that the identity known as the sense of self (how we see ourselves and how others perceive us) forms the foundation of the adult personality. If the foundation is strong, then a solid identity results; if it is not, then it becomes a diffused identity. Diffused identity happens when an adolescent fails to form a strong coherent sense of self. To overcome the identity crisis, the adolescent resolves the conflicts between identity and identity diffusion.

Self-concept and self-esteem are important parts of identity. While people seek answers to their identity, they also engage in describing and evaluating themselves. Sprinthall and Collins (1995) stress that the self refers to:

> ...[the] sense of who we are and how are we similar to and distinctive from others. This sense of self is partly cognitive (e.g., our ways of describing ourselves) and partly emotional (e.g., our evaluations of ourselves as good or bad at doing tasks or performing activities). (p. 167)

The ways of describing ourselves provide another word for self-concept. Self-concept refers to the terms in which we think about and describe personal characteristics while self-esteem refers to the evaluative dimension of the self-concept; the evaluations of ourselves as good or bad (Sprinthall & Collins, 1995).

Adolescents' self descriptions change during the years of adolescence, giving more attention to social, personality characteristics and belief systems. This leads to greater awareness and understanding of themselves due to their mature cognitive abilities (Sprinthall & Collins, 1995).

Sprinthall and Collins (1995) observe that the studies on self-concept and self-esteem among high school students "...indicate that thoughts and feelings about self do indeed undergo significant changes during adolescence, but they also imply that the changes occur much more

gradually than theorists like Erikson, Hall and Freud have implied" (p. 182). Furthermore, Mitchell (1992) cautions that:

> Even though "experts" in adolescent behaviour write endlessly about the adolescent experience we usually prefer not to emphasize how little we know with genuine certainty. Most of what we claim to know is conjectural rather than empirical, inferred rather than observed, and correlational rather than causal. (p. 136)

Deaf Culture

Until the sixties, deaf people were identified as people with hearing losses that needed to be corrected through the means of utilizing hearing aids and other technical devices. They were, in a sense, incomplete models who needed to be fixed in order to fit into the mould of a normal hearing person (Padden & Humphries, 1988). Deaf culture was little understood and rarely discussed although it had always existed. However, despite the recent long-fought recognition and acceptance of Deaf culture, the clinical view is still being adopted by some professionals, parents, societies and deaf people (Moores, 1987; Padden & Humphries, 1988).

Deaf culture is defined as "...a group of persons who share a common means of communication (a manual/visual signs system) which provides the basis for group cohesion and identity [and] share a common language (ASL) and a common culture" (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980, p. 54). In a similar vein, Paul and Jackson (1993) explain that "...Deaf culture is the view of life manifested by the mores, beliefs, artistic expression, understandings and language particular to Deaf people" (p. 218). Deaf people who identify themselves culturally are referred to with an upper case 'D' (Deaf) while the lower case 'd' (deaf) signifies a medical or an audiological condition.

Of all the characteristics of Deaf culture, the profound core of Deaf culture is the language. The language is American Sign Language (ASL) which has an unique set of phonological, syntactic, and semantic structures that is entirely different from English or any other oral languages (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980; Padden & Humphries, 1988). For Deaf people, ASL is used "...to interact with each other, to communicate their ideas, emotions and intentions, and to transmit their culture from generation to generation" (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980, p. 31).

Deaf culture exists in schools for the deaf, and in Deaf communities (Moores, 1987). Unfortunately, Deaf culture is not found in mainstreamed environments because of the lack of, or the minimal contact with, Deaf role-models and courses on Deaf studies (Holcomb, 1993).

Deaf Identity

Individuals who are considered as having a Deaf identity, as Sussman (1986) points out, possess qualities such as:

> ...an ability to view deafness as a human condition rather than a deficit, an ability to use deafness to his/her advantage, the ability to identify him/herself with the Deaf community, and perhaps, the most important quality of all, the ability to incorporate all these qualities to effectively participate in the mainstream. (cited in Holcomb, 1993, p. 43)

Deaf people with positive Deaf identity view themselves as whole persons (Holcomb, 1993; Padden & Humphries, 1988). Deaf identity involves identifying with the Deaf community and culture which enables the person to incorporate certain values, emotions and attitude in order to function in everyday life.

Adopting a Deaf identity gives a person a sense of belonging, reduces the feelings of isolation, and encourages the use of effective communication (Foster, 1988; Foster, 1989; Holcomb, 1993). To develop a positive Deaf identity, one has to interact with others, especially his/her parents and the significant others, preferably those who are Deaf (Holcomb, 1993).

Terms used in this study.

For the purpose of clarity, I have deliberately made a distinction in the meaning between Deaf and deaf. There is a significant difference between the terms. For individuals who are members of the Deaf community, incorporate cultural values, and use ASL as a primary language for communication, I have used the term "Deaf" (capitalized D). The term "deaf" is used to refer to the significant hearing loss an individual possesses.

Educational Placement

Historically, it was common for deaf students to be placed in special schools for the deaf with other deaf students (Moores, 1987; Schein, Mallory, & Greaves, 1991). There are two groups of deaf students attending schools for the deaf. One group attends classes and returns home every evening while the other group resides at school during the week and may return home on weekends (Schein, Mallory, & Greaves, 1991). Today, things have changed in the education of the deaf. There is a decrease in enrolment in schools for the deaf while we see growing in numbers of deaf children and adolescents attending regular schools (Freeman,

Carbin, & Boese, 1981).

Current education for deaf individuals in North America has given a lot of attention to mainstreaming (Schein, Mallory, & Greaves, 1991). The mandate of United States' Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 provides, "a free, appropriate, and individualized education for each handicapped child" in the least restrictive environment (Freeman, Carbin, & Boese, 1981, p. 250). Moores (1992) clarifies least restrictive environment to mean that it allows all special needs children to be educated with children who have no disabilities in a public school.

Mainstreaming refers to a placement strategy that allows deaf students to attend regular classes with hearing students with or without special accommodations such as an interpreter, notetakers, FM system and other specific needs (Schein, Mallory, & Greaves, 1991). There may be more than one deaf student attending the regular school or class, or there may be only one person who is deaf in the class or sometimes in the entire school. While mainstreamed programs exist in high schools, they vary considerably because of provincial policies, the students' situation, and communication needs and goals. It is important to be reminded that the individual is nonetheless mainstreamed in a hearing environment.

The choice of educational placement is usually personal. Parents usually decide the educational placement for the deaf child on the basis of the informed resources they have (Kluwin & Gaustad, 1992; Moores, 1987). In the past, students who were mainstreamed tended to have less severe hearing losses, more intelligible speech, and come from a higher social economic status (Freeman, Carbin, & Boese, 1981; Moores, 1992). Now, there is a growing number of sign language interpreters in regular classrooms which increases the number of profoundly deaf children being mainstreamed (Schildroth, 1988).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives on identity among deaf individuals who had been mainstreamed. In the light of current literature, the identity of deaf persons who are mainstreamed has not been fully addressed. In my personal observations and informal conversations with deaf people whom I have met over the years, they have shared their life experiences. The theme of their life experiences appears to focus on their "struggles" surrounding their deafness. It is interesting to

me that some of the deaf people from deaf families do not seem to go through this process.

My personal aim was to explore the experiences of young deaf adults and to allow deaf individuals to be heard so that other mainstreamed deaf students can understand what it was like to grow up in a mainstreamed educational environment and deal with situations that might influence their identity development.

The question I wish to investigate is: **What are the perspectives of identity for deaf individuals who grew up in mainstreamed classes?**

Significance of the Study

The study is important for a number of reasons. Expanding numbers of deaf students are mainstreamed in regular schools, and it has become more important than ever for educators, parents, and professionals to better understand what this might mean to the students in terms of identity. With this insight and understanding, they can collaboratively work with deaf adolescents. Likewise, the information shared may reassure deaf adolescents and adults alike that they are not alone in their experiences.

This study augments the literature on identity, mainstreaming, and deafness. That is achieved through the sharing of mainstreamed deaf persons' stories.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One presents my personal perspective of the question being studied and provides a background to the study. The problem is stated, along with the purpose and significance of the study.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of areas revolving around the experiences of identity construction. This review highlights research on the social experiences of young deaf people, the communication and language challenges they face and issues related to identity.

Chapter Three explains the qualitative methodology of this study. Included are the descriptions of the methods and procedures that were conducted in this study along with my personal perspectives and biases.

Chapter Four introduces the participants and their stories of their perspectives on identity. Five themes emerged from the data which are portrayed in a way that best reveals

their experiences and their perspectives.

Chapter Five entails a discussion of the important themes and existing literature. Recommendations and further research are included for implications on the deaf adolescents in the mainstreaming environment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Do not become archivist of facts.
Try to penetrate to the secret of their occurrence,
persistently search for the laws which govern them.
Ivan Pavlov

Although there are numerous articles available on mainstreaming deaf and hard of hearing individuals into regular classroom environments, currently, the literature pertaining specifically to mainstreamed deaf adolescents and identity construction is extremely limited. For that reason, this review looks at information on the impact of deafness on social experiences, communication issues, and identity among deaf people.

For the purpose of organization and ease of reading, the review is organized as follows: a) social experiences, b) communication and language, and c) identity and related concepts.

Social Experiences

Recent studies by Foster (1988), Foster (1989), Foster and Brown (1988), and Mertens (1989) utilize qualitative methodology to explore deaf students' perceptions toward their social experiences in a mainstreamed educational environment. Each study will be explored in the light of understanding the social experiences deaf students had in the mainstreamed environment. All participants in the studies were undergraduate students reflecting on their past mainstreaming experiences in high school.

Foster (1988) studied fifteen deaf college freshmen's experiences of their mainstreamed high school. She used open-ended interviews with the participants on the topics involving classroom experiences, interactions with teachers, participation in school activities, and relationships with other students. Regarding the social experiences, Foster found that the quality of the participants' social interaction in high school varied widely. Six individuals reported that they had a good social life, participating in clubs and sports activities, and had hearing friends. The other individuals admitted to difficulties with interactions and communication with hearing people; however, they "felt the benefits of being in the 'hearing world' outweighed the disadvantages" (p. 32). Only five students described loneliness and rejection by their hearing peers on the basis of difficult communication. They also described

the limited superficial conversations and interactions.

Foster (1989) interviewed twenty-five deaf adults to learn more about the experiences which lead deaf people to seek interaction with each other, and the difficulties they have encountered with their family, friends and employees. The findings of the study revealed a strong dominant theme that emerged from the data: "the social rejection by and alienation from the larger hearing community" (p. 226). The deaf participants felt even though they had social opportunities to interact with hearing students at college, the interactions were often less rewarding and meaningful than those with deaf peers.

> ...these difficult interactions with hearing students reinforced [participants'] sense of community with other deaf people during the college years. In some cases, [participants] said that they found a new identity through interactions with deaf peers. As one person put it, "[college] was a wonderful experience for me...one of the things it taught me was "who I was." (Foster, 1989, p. 231)

Foster (1989) suggested that the findings supported the idea that the deaf and hearing people negotiate the social meaning of deafness through interaction. In her discussion section, she noted that hearing culture often has viewed deaf people as deviant and cast them into this role, and more than not, these deaf people reacted accordingly unconsciously and consciously. The Deaf community has begun to renegotiate its social role within the larger community and is challenging the larger society's pathological views.

A study by Foster and Brown (1988) focused on the college academic and social aspects of mainstreaming from the perspective of twenty mainstreamed deaf college students. This was conducted through in-depth open-ended interviews. The findings indicated that the students felt they were succeeding academically however, they experienced isolation within the mainstreamed class. Three factors that influenced isolation were attributed to the grouping of deaf students, the use of support services and the students' perception of themselves and others. The students were concerned with how their performance would be viewed by others and were reluctant to participate in class in their view of a potential in making a fool of themselves. In relation to social experiences with hearing students, the deaf students described rejection, loneliness, and negativism. However, some recalled positive interactions with hearing students, best described as acquaintanceships. Close friendships with hearing students were rare. Instead, they tended to interact more with deaf peers and participated in Deaf clubs and social activities for meaningful friendships.

Through open-ended questionnaires, Mertens (1989) investigated forty-nine deaf

undergraduate students' reasons as to why their high school experiences were described as positive or negative. Also, the study identified specific classroom dynamics that contributed to or detracted from social development. The findings indicated that the graduates of mainstreamed schools reported significantly fewer positive social experiences than graduates of residential schools. Reasons included the lack of support services in the academic environment, no presence of other deaf classmates or the opportunity to socialize with deaf students, few hearing friends, and low teachers' expectations. Mainstreamed students who described their experiences more positively had the benefit of support services, better speech skills, parent involvement, encouragement of interaction and deaf awareness by the teachers.

All findings from the above qualitative studies indicated that as a group, deaf students did not appear to be as well accepted as their hearing peers. Moreover, Foster's (1988) study suggests that social mainstreaming may be more difficult to achieve than academic mainstreaming, "...since the deaf student is frequently on his or her own when attempting to initiate or sustain relationships with peers" (p. 27). Research on deaf mainstreamed students suggests that they often experience areas of difficulty in social relationships. For example, the majority of deaf students in the Foster's study (1988) described loneliness, rejection and social isolation as part of their social experiences. Likewise, Mertens (1989) indicated similar findings and also found that students from mainstreamed schools reported more negative social experiences than those from residential schools. Foster and Brown (1988) interviewed twenty college deaf students who shared classes with hearing students and found that the deaf students were rarely involved socially with their hearing peers.

It is noteworthy that deaf students from residential schools reported more positive social experiences compared to mainstreamed deaf students. This perhaps may be attributed to what Garreston (1977) described as an "unwritten curriculum". Garreston (1977) described it as "...a variety of informal interactions which routinely occur between students in school [of the deaf], such as conversations on the bus and in the halls, and participation in extracurricular activities" (cited in Foster, 1988, p. 27). This view is also supported by Moores (1987) in that many schools of the deaf offer a wide range of athletic and social programs which may advance social and personal growth among deaf individuals.

Farrugia and Austin (1980) examined the difference in social-emotional adjustment patterns among two hundred deaf and hard of hearing students in different educational settings. They used the Meadow/Kendall Socio-Emotional Assessment Inventory to compare the social-

emotional adjustment of deaf residential students, deaf mainstreamed students, hard of hearing students in public day classes and hearing students in public schools. The results suggest that the scores of deaf residential students and hearing students in public schools were the most similar in all areas of development. Both hard of hearing students and deaf students in public schools appeared to demonstrate lower levels of social, emotional, and mature behaviours. According to Farrugia and Austin (1980), the "...speculative explanation for these findings is directly related to the social isolation and social rejection that the deaf student appears to experience in the company of hearing peers" (p. 539).

Although reports of negative social experiences are common among mainstreamed deaf students, there are still some positive interactions with their hearing peers, however few. Saur, Layne, Hurley, and Opton (1986) reported through participant observation and interviewing that participation, relationships, and feelings were of importance to eight college deaf and twenty-eight hearing students in a classroom. These three dimensions influenced the interactions and relationships among deaf and hearing students. The findings revealed that the frequency of interaction in a classroom between hearing and deaf students was dependent on acceptance, shared interest and familiarity. The study reinforces the idea that the central task for mainstreamed deaf students is to achieve interactive competency by adapting to their environment and for the hearing students to adapt as well, thus leading to competent mutual interaction of both parties, which overall turns into increased positive interactions.

Stinson and Kluwin (in press) investigated the social orientation the deaf adolescents have toward deaf and hearing peers in the local public high schools. The researchers categorized four different patterns of relationships with deaf and hearing peers groups: "the student (a) is socially oriented to hearing peers, but not deaf ones; (b) is socially oriented to toward deaf peers, but not hearing ones; (c) has positive social orientations to both groups; and (d) does not have positive social orientation toward either group" (p. 11). They also studied how positive the person's social orientation is toward the group. The findings of four hundred and fifty one deaf adolescents in fifteen local public schools indicate that communication skills along with other variables influence the distinction of social orientation of students. Moreover, they discovered three groups: "...those who already are likely to be assimilated to hearing peers and whose high school placement will reinforce that; those students who already are likely to prefer deaf peers and whose high school experiences will reinforce that orientation because of a school program enforced separation from hearing peers; and those whose affiliation remains

to be defined" (p. 22). Such influence, they suggest at the conclusion of their study, begins long before high school.

Some evidence indicates that deaf students prefer to socialize with peers similar to them (Foster, 1989; Leigh & Stinson, 1991). Leigh and Stinson (1991) commented on a study conducted by Stinson et al., (1990) that the deaf students in a public school rated themselves as interacting more frequently with other deaf than with hearing peers in mainstreamed classes and at school. The mean ratings of participants in both classes and schools with deaf students was higher than those with hearing peers (Leigh & Stinson, 1991). The preference for interacting with deaf peers is congruent with Foster's (1989) findings that these youths "...turn to deaf people in order to meet specific needs which were not met through interactions with hearing people" (p. 233). In summary, these individuals appear to have found social acceptance, intimacy and community with deaf peers.

Communication and Language

While communication is a key element in the socialization process and socialization is a necessary part of adolescence, the interaction between the adolescents and their environments, parents and peers becomes critical (Garbe & Rodda, 1988). Garbe and Rodda (1988) indicate that:

> It is through communication and interaction that adolescents learn where they fit in with society, which in turn affects the way they view themselves and the world about them. Belonging to a group and feeling needed and loved are decisive psychological aspects to any adolescent. (p. 60)

According to Furth (1973), a deaf individual faces a unique challenge: "...[that] deafness is a very big obstacle to communication, and the greatest psychological danger to which the deaf person is prone is isolation" (p. 43).

Reputable studies reveal the commonality among deaf and hearing students: communication difficulties. Five respondents in Foster's (1988) study of the mainstreaming experience said that in a social situation, they felt lonely and left out, and frustrated because they were unable to communicate with their hearing peers. Mertens (1989) found that mainstreamed deaf students had few hearing friends and that they were not close to them due to difficulty with communication. Furthermore, Charlson, Strong, and Gold (1992) concluded that most of the mainstreamed students they interviewed about coping with isolation had

attributed isolation from hearing peers to being unable to communicate easily with them. Consequently, the communication difficulties of deaf students may greatly affect the access to hearing peers and hinder their abilities to form close relationships.

Davis (1986) found that students with excellent oral communication skills appear to have more positive social experiences than those who have weak oral skills. This is so since these students identified themselves as hard of hearing who were more comfortable with their speech skills and enjoyed the company of hearing peers more than deaf peers. Deaf adolescents proficient in sign language tend to interact with deaf signers. Murphy and Newlon (1987) conclude that deaf signers had fewer feelings of loneliness than those who were not comfortable using sign language (cited in Leigh & Stinson, 1991). Heller (1978) also states that:

> Those comfortable with sign language may feel closer bonds to [deaf] people as a social group because shared ways of communicating are basic to the formation of social relationships and to access to social networks and because development of sign language skills goes hand in hand with personal commitment to the group. (cited in Leigh & Stinson, 1991, p. 12)

Guastad and Kluwin (1992) stress that the quality of a relationship between deaf signers and hearing peers is dependent on the deaf student's proficiency in speech. The high school deaf youths who sign and speak, not necessary simultaneously, report that they use speech, and sometimes signs to accompany speech with hearing peers. These findings are consistent with Padden and Humphries' (1988) conclusions that individuals with proficient oral communication skills can more easily interact with hearing peers and may be more likely to develop rewarding relationships with them while deaf signers are more likely to establish satisfying relationship with deaf peers.

Identity and Related Concepts

This section will restrict its focus to identity among deaf people. The mainstreamed deaf students' social experiences and communication difficulties are further complicated by the development of their own self-identity. It becomes extremely crucial for adolescents to find answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "How do I fit into the Deaf and hearing world?" In the following, literature containing information about identity and deafness, and self-concept and self-esteem will be explored in-depth.

Although the process of identity development occurs in the family environment where a child is reared, this review will devote more attention to educational settings since they encourage social relationships which in turn influence overall identity. Most literature in this respect deals with theoretical perspectives and thus empirical measures are limited since again, "most of what we claim to know is conjectural rather than empirical, inferred rather than observed, and correlational rather than causal" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 136).

Identity and Deafness

Moores (1987) explained the fact that the education of the deaf is greatly influenced by general education. Many of the ideas on pedagogy for hearing children are also shared with deaf children. Issues regarding overall identity development across the human life span are also similar for both deaf and hearing individuals. What is being said theoretically for hearing adolescents can also be said for deaf adolescents. However, hearing loss has implications that are not shared among the hearing adolescents. Moores (1987) says that when there is a functional lack of a major sense (e.g., hearing loss), it affects the way people develop and use their intellectual skills. For instance, the environment of a deaf individual is qualitatively different from that of a hearing person, even if they grow up in the same environment.

Moores (1987) described three stages of perceptions towards the intellectual functioning of deaf people in different historical times. Each stage changed in accordance to empirical research over the years. The first stage portrayed deaf people as intellectually inferior; stage two viewed deaf people as qualitatively different and stage three recognized deaf people as being intellectually normal. The last stage has contributed a realistic change, more of a healthier view of deaf people. This in turn, increased the growing interest in learning more about deaf people in the context of normalcy.

Leigh and Stinson (1991) asked, "What does the hearing world expect of the [deaf] adolescent?" (p. 16) to challenge the idea of where the deaf individual fits within the larger society. Traditionally, deafness is an invisible disability where communication needs separate deaf people from hearing peers. Many children with physical disabilities have parents who want them to develop primary identification with the able-bodied world (Showe, 1979). Higgins (1990) points out that individuals with disabilities, in our eyes, "...are flawed, tainted, discredited. We do not see them as equally worthy people. We may not even see them as people at all" (p. 133).

Yet, from my experience, deaf individuals have withstood the general negative image portrayed and have found worth in themselves. However, the process of finding self worth is complicated by the external and internal factors played in the environment and self. Higgins (1990) shares his powerful observations of deaf people in the mainstreamed environment:

> [Deaf people] can be caught between people and places that deny who they are and others, including themselves, who seek to affirm who they are. They may embrace themselves, but they may discredit themselves. They may long to be like those who stigmatize them, but they may repudiate their oppressors. They may be uncertain with whom they belong, or they may develop a common bond with others. Children and youth who have had little contact with deaf adults may wonder what will happen to them as adults. Will they be deaf? If so, who will they be? And the parents of these deaf children have similar concerns. Who are their children and who will they become? (p. 133)

Clearly, there is a burden among deaf individuals to challenge and break the stigmatization. When these individuals are mainstreamed with hearing students who are indifferent to them and separate them from deaf people, the burden worsens (Higgins, 1990). However, Higgins (1990) is optimistic that the burden can be lessened by allowing the mainstreamed deaf individuals "...to affirm themselves by creating a Deaf identity" (p. 134). Through a sense of belonging with the Deaf people, they are empowered to enhance their identity. This will in turn influence the overall mainstreamed program (Higgins, 1990).

For the first time ever, Glickman and Carey (1993) developed a preliminary scale that describes and measures Deaf identities quantitatively in four different ways: culturally hearing, culturally marginal, immersion and bicultural. Each identity reflects the orientation the person is affiliated with as a reference point for normality and health. The first type of identity, "culturally hearing", refers to deaf people viewing their deafness as a pathology and adopting dominant hearing values in their lives. The second kind, "culturally marginal", is for those who could not fit and be comfortable with either world, hearing or Deaf. The third is "immersion", where deaf people immerse themselves in the Deaf world with Deaf values and beliefs and discourage themselves from using hearing values and principles. Lastly, "the bicultural" identity is reserved for deaf people who feel comfortable in both worlds, hearing and Deaf. They value their deafness, Deaf culture, and values, and also take pride in supporting hearing values and hearing people except for oppression and paternalism.

Bat-Chava and Lindermayer (1995) conducted a study on deaf adults to "ascertain whether these four types [in regards to identity] of people existed in a sample of deaf adults"

(p. 3). With that frame of questioning, they employed Glickman and Carey's (1993) Deaf identity scale in their study. Their findings from two hundred and sixty-seven deaf adults reinforce the idea that deaf people can belong to these categories: a) thirty-three percent of the sample had a positive attitude towards deaf people, found signing of great importance over speech and therefore could be identified as having Deaf identity or are immersed in the Deaf world; b) twenty-four percent had a negative attitude toward deaf people, viewed speech as important over sign language and could be identified as culturally hearing; c) thirty-four percent had a positive attitude toward deaf people but found signing and speech equally important and were said to have bicultural identity; d) the remaining nine percent had marginal identity in the view that both signing and speech are unimportant. One of their main findings revealed that all of these deaf adults had reported changes in their identity from childhood to adulthood. A further revealing finding showed that the biculturally deaf adults reported a change from more hearing-oriented to more deaf-oriented but not vice versa.

Meanwhile with increased interest in the cultural avenue and values among members of the Deaf community, there continue to exist many deaf adolescents with hearing parents and siblings and, often, they want to belong to a hearing world. This is the world where the expectations demand oral expressive and receptive skills and the adoption of similar values and beliefs. The impact of deafness on the communication process plays a major role when the child becomes an adolescent. It is when the family realizes the communication limitations and for some, communication barriers may destroy the family's expectations of "normalcy" instead of facing reality (Leigh & Stinson, 1991; Moores, 1987). At the same time, the adolescent is struggling with his or her identity within the hearing and Deaf worlds. For example, Charlson, Strong and Gold (1992), in a qualitative study on coping with isolation in a mainstreamed educational environment, interviewed a teenager who was a basketball star at his hearing school. He shared his confusion about establishing his identity:

> I don't like the fact that I have trouble talking to people. It seems like people look at me as a hearing person, but in reality I'm really not. But I think I act like a hearing person but I think I can call myself hard of hearing in some ways because I think I'm in between deaf and hearing. I'm in between them.... (p. 264)

Equally important, the perception of deaf people can differ greatly between the Deaf community and the hearing environment. In the hearing environment, a deaf individual may be passive and withdrawn, while in the Deaf community this same person may be more active and involved. Foster (1989) interviewed hearing people, who supervise deaf persons in an

employment setting. They shared their perspectives of their deaf employees by describing them as "shy, quiet....a loner" (p. 233). She cautions in her discussion that, however accurate the supervisors' observations of their deaf employees' behaviours may be, their interpretations of them do not reflect accurate or reliable descriptions of intrinsic characteristics of deaf people (Foster, 1989).

Self-concept and self-esteem.

Self-concept and self-esteem are related to identity in terms of describing and evaluating oneself (Sprinthall & Collins, 1995). Below are the studies that measured self-concept and self-esteem, which reveal findings that may influence identity. Findings indicate that communication and parental approach are important influences.

Warren and Hasenstab (1986) studied fifty-eight deaf children from ages five to eleven to determine if a relationship was evident between self-concept and selected variables such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, communication method, parents' hearing status, etiology of impairment, language and communication development prior to impairment, and parents' approach to child rearing. They used Gutterman's (1982) definition for self-concept defined as "...a person's evaluation of his or her own traits, attitudes, social position, and self in general; it is the way a person feels and thinks about him or herself" (p. 289).

They used Picture Game as a measure of dependent variable for the self-concept. The results show that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and parental approach and that the parental child rearing attitudes appear to be the best predictor of deaf children's self-concept. According to the researchers:

> [a] child learns about self and begins to formalize a self-concept in the context of the family. The family's attitudes toward the child and his or her resulting feelings about him or herself set the stage for future interactions. If the child feels accepted, he or she can in turn accept him/herself and hopefully convey an air of self-worth to others...[a] child perceived as less valued due to a physical difference can be easily led through a self-attribution process, resulting in poor self-concept. (p. 293)

In addition, there is evidence that language and communication development have some relationship to self-concept. Warren and Hasenstab (1986) feel that communication is an essential factor for any child, and that "...if ability to communicate is hindered, a child's ability to develop a strong self-concept will be severely limited" (p. 293). Research and literature (Holcomb, 1993; Moores, 1987) have revealed the communication difficulties that exist

between a deaf child and his or her hearing parents which may in turn contribute the poor self-concept of the child.

A study conducted by Yachnik (1987) on self-esteem reveals the findings that deaf adolescents of deaf parents had higher self-esteem than deaf adolescents of hearing parents. Yachnik (1987) did not provide any definitions on the construct of self-esteem. He used a self-description questionnaire III (SDQ III) with two hundred and seventeen deaf students and their parents. His findings revealed several patterns of discrepancies between adolescent self-ratings and parent ratings of the adolescents. The possible explanation for his findings was that the social relationships (e.g., family) outside school settings may affect deaf adolescents' perceptions of themselves as social beings. The deaf adolescents of hearing parents had more contact with the hearing environment than deaf adolescents of deaf parents. Situations such as these led them to feeling alienated since they are a minority in a hearing society. Also, hearing parents were more likely to communicate orally with their deaf youngsters which possibly further contributed to feelings of inferiority.

Bat-Chava (1993) examined self-esteem among deaf people through the meta-analysis of forty-two empirical studies. She hypothesized that deaf people have significantly lower self-esteem than those who are hearing. Six constructs appeared to influence self-esteem: hearing status, parents' hearing status, type of school attended, communication mode used at home and in school, and group identification. The results appeared to support the hypothesis that deaf people have lower self-esteem than hearing people.

However, Bat-Chava (1993) also noted that three factors, the self-esteem measure, its format, and the communication mode in which tests were administered may also have influenced the findings. She cautions that "the variability in comparisons between deaf and hearing people's self-esteem prevents us from concluding that deaf people have lower self-esteem than the hearing majority" (p. 228).

Bat-Chava (1993) also found that deaf individuals with parents who are deaf and deaf individuals whose parents (regardless of the hearing status) used sign language at home have higher self-esteem compared to people with hearing parents or whose parents used oral communication. The data is consistent with Warren and Hasenstab's (1986) reflections of their findings, that parental acceptance is associated with higher self-esteem in children.

Summary

As seen in this review, many deaf adolescents appear to have negative social experiences in the mainstreamed educational setting. Their interactions with hearing people in class and outside of school were limited and curt. Many ended up lonely and dejected. This was attributed to the communication difficulties they had when socializing with hearing students. There appeared to be a correlation between the speech skills the deaf individuals have and their involvement with hearing peers. The better the deaf student speaks, the higher the interaction with hearing peers that follows. This leads deaf people to enjoy more the company of hearing people. This is also true for deaf signers who prefer to be with other deaf people who sign.

Historically, deaf people were typically viewed as deficient, disabled and intellectually inferior. Recent research is beginning to explore Deaf culture and Deaf identities among deaf people. However, the majority of deaf children are born to hearing families where they learn first the values of the family and society. These hearing values continue to influence them until they encounter Deaf people where they may learn Deaf cultural values and add to or modify their existing values.

Deaf adolescents who have deaf parents appear to have higher self-concepts than those whose parents are hearing and those who use oral communication. The same appears to be true for children from residential schools. Albeit the school environment influences the deaf students' self-concept and self-esteem, parents are seen to have an important and major influence on the deaf child. Communication and language are two important influential factors that influence the child's self-concept.

The next chapter explains the methodology used to investigate the question, "What are the perspectives of identity for deaf individuals who grew up in mainstreamed classes?" To address the methodology, a succinct introduction on the qualitative paradigm, my personal perspective, knowledge and biases, participant selection, interviewing and analysis are given.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Let us, then, be what we are; speak what we think;
and in all things keep ourselves loyal to truth.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The intent of this research is to better understand the experiences of the participants. To accomplish this task, I have selected a qualitative, human science research approach (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992; Patton, 1990). A qualitative approach is employed in this case because of the question being investigated and my own understanding of how we can best learn about another person's perspective. I seek "...to grasp the processes by which [participants] construct meanings and to describe what those meanings are" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992, p. 49). This approach is suitable for the intent of this research.

Bracketing: Personal Perspectives

A good qualitative researcher identifies his or her own predispositions, preconceptions, and biases at the beginning of the research in order to keep future data less obscured (Osborne, 1989). The process of doing this is referred to as "bracketing". This is a very critical part of qualitative research since the researcher is an instrument of data collection and analysis. Casting in the role of a researcher, she must "...become aware of and deal with selective perception, personal biases, and theoretical predispositions" (Patton, 1990, p. 56). To attempt the bracketing procedure throughout this study, the following highlights my personal preconceptions and biases.

My own interest in this question stems largely from my own personal experience and my observation of others who went through a similar phase of identity formation. Having been deaf since birth, mainstreamed for fifteen years since three years old, having worn one hearing aid since three years old, and being raised in an oral environment until I was eighteen years old when I learned American Sign Language, my understanding of this topic is broad. These previous experiences, a few related documented qualitative studies, some information from the literature, and my personal interest of this topic has led me to question what perspectives deaf mainstreamed adolescents have regarding their personal and social identity formation.

While I was growing up, there were so many labels that were used upon me and other deaf classmates such as "hearing impaired", "hard of hearing", "deaf", "hearing handicapped", "handicapped", "mental retarded" and "deaf and mute". I had little understanding of what each word meant and used them because hearing people had used them to identify me. Had I known the meaning each word constitutes, would I have been more assured about who I am? That I do not know. I am sure that this experience is common with other deaf adolescents who go to mainstreamed schools.

Throughout my life, I grew up with people who are hearing; my family, my relatives and my friends. This is not so surprising as ninety percent of deaf children are born into hearing families. Like the majority of deaf individuals, I was mainstreamed in all classes in both elementary and high school with hearing students except for Language Arts/English class which I shared with one deaf student and a teacher of the deaf. There were about eight deaf and hard of hearing students attending the school I went to with a population of eight hundred hearing students. Despite having one close deaf friend, I had numerous exposures to the "hearing" environment. The struggles I had with my identity began to escalate during my high school years because as a teen, I felt I did not readily identify with the hearing students and I also did not belong to the social groups the hearing students belonged to. With my inability to identify socially with hearing peers, I could not determine my own identity personally. As a result, I was confused about who I was. I remember that I was adamant at becoming hearing, that my hearing loss would be restored at a magic age and then, all my troubles would disappear. It never dawned on me that I am deaf and always will be.

I was eighteen years old when I became a student at Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts university in the world for the Deaf. My four year experience at Gallaudet University taught me a lot in regards to who I am and during that process, I became comfortable with my own identity. I have discovered that many students with similar background as I had, underwent similar questioning processes about their identity and later learned more of themselves, identity-wise. I wonder if this experience is universal among mainstreamed deaf students, that they grow up feeling "incomplete and different" among hearing people and only to be "complete and whole" when they interact with many Deaf people. I realized that, for me, being aware of and possessing Deaf identity did not occur within the mainstreamed context.

I know many Deaf adults who are actively involved with the Deaf community and had

a strong mainstreamed educational background. They have found solace and acceptance of who they are in the Deaf community whereas during their high school years, they were unsure of their own identity on the basis of their perception that they were considered "outsiders" by their hearing peers. This had resulted in underdeveloped or confused identity formation until their later years or when they "found" Deaf people.

The aforementioned experiences might influence my beliefs about this topic: I wonder if many deaf adolescents encounter similar beliefs about their personal and social identity. Importantly, I do not intentionally seek to confirm these perceptions. Instead, my reflections and assumptions were entered into my journal notes prior to and after the interviews. I tried to include all my conscious presumptions and understanding of the topic in my notes. Bodgan and Bilken (1992) say that by having these assumptions and reflections in the notes,"...they can be confronted and measured against (compared with) what emerges in the course of the study" (p. 123). Furthermore, reflections on this process both help as well as document it. I believe that my being the researcher for this study is the strength, not only because it relies on the researcher as the instrument, but the process of doing the study consciously and the reflective part of fieldnotes is one way to assess the researcher's effect (Bodgan & Bilken, 1992).

The goal of this study was to interview the participants and allow them to share their high school experiences and insights regarding identity. The participants shared their identity experiences and their perceptions toward themselves in high school, which is explored in Chapter Four. The participants' stories speak for themselves.

Selection of Participants

The seven participants recruited in this study are personal acquaintances of mine. I have met most of them informally through social functions at the university for the last two and a half years. Small samples are common in the qualitative paradigm and are studied in-depth (Patton, 1990). In this case, the participants are selected purposefully because "...one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). They indeed contributed rich information that illuminated the question investigated in this study.

In the winter of 1995, to fulfil partial requirements for a graduate course, I interviewed

one participant about his perspective of his identity within the mainstreamed educational setting. He was the first participant in this study and I have decided to include his story in the formal study because his story is still relevant to the question being investigated.

The remaining six participants were recruited through my contacts by either phone or electronic mail. I explained and outlined the basic information of my thesis plans to them and all were delighted at the prospect of being the participants in my study. I then personally thanked them for their willingness to be involved with this study.

To select participants for this study, guidelines needed to be established and criteria outlined. The participants were selected on the basis of these criteria:

- Participants were born deaf;
- Both male and female participants were included;
- Participants were to have hearing parents;
- Participants were to have more than four years of mainstreaming experiences, especially at high school level;
- Participants were to be students currently at either college or university in any province;
- Participants were to have the ability to express themselves;
- Participants were to possess no additional disabilities other than being deaf.

Two participants did not meet one of the criteria outlined. One participant had deaf parents and I decided to include his experiences as well because his experiences revealed interesting findings about Deaf culture and role models. This participant said he grew up with no role models and possessed Hearing identity. This is quite uncommon and quite contrary to the literature on deaf families with deaf children (Moores, 1987; Padden & Humphries, 1988).

The other participant was born hearing and became deafened at the age of five. This finding was revealed during the interview and I made the decision to include her experiences in this study because she has offered relevant information.

All participants were invited to speak about their direct experiences honestly and openly with me without any concerns regarding my own beliefs in mainstreaming and identity.

Data Collection: Interview

Interviewing is one way of gaining access to the "rich" data of the person being interviewed (Patton, 1990). The object of interviewing is to get the interviewee to talk about experiences, feelings, opinions and knowledge (Patton, 1990). To understand and capture the participants' descriptive experiences, I utilized a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, following the interview guide I developed. However, each participant was encouraged to expand his/her descriptions of his/her experiences. For some participants, I used probing techniques to understand the phenomenon being studied. The questions were aimed to "...permit respondents to respond in their own terms" (Patton, 1990, p. 295) without presupposing certain responses.

I explained the research question to the participants and all appeared to be prepared to share their experiences. To start the interview, I did not probe the aspect of identity immediately; instead, I focused on their family and educational experiences. This was meant to ease the participants into the past and to have them reflect on their experiences during that time frame. When the participants came themselves to the issue of identity, I, then, started to ask questions pertaining to their identity experiences or I encouraged them to stay focused on the identity topic.

I used the interview guide to guide me along the interview. The guide included the general questions as follows. I always started the interview with the first question and from there, the questions were asked accordingly as their stories developed or to keep drawing on the experiences from the participants.

1. Tell me about your family background and high school experiences; education and social.
2. How did you feel about your mainstreaming experience?
3. Tell me your definition of identity.
4. How did you perceive yourself during high school times and now? What were your feelings toward yourself at that time?
5. Who were your role models and why?
6. What advice would you like to give to other mainstreamed deaf students and other people?

Open-ended questions were used as much as possible during the interview and in a few cases, a few leading questions were asked only to clarify certain issues such as "Were you the only deaf student in your school?" Generally, the participants voluntarily offered information until they could not describe any further. Then I would introduce another question. This cyclic process continued until they were repeating earlier similar stories and I then terminated the interview with the agreement of the participant.

The participants living in Edmonton were met twice. The first time was for the general discussion about my research plans and the participants asked questions before the interview. At that point, after meeting their questions satisfactorily, the consent form (see Appendix A) was introduced and explained fully. Then the interview commenced. After the interview and the transcription were completed, they were contacted again via telephone or electronic mail to arrange a time to meet to review the transcript. After reviewing the transcript, they were given the opportunity to add further to data.

Two participants lived outside of the province and they took a business opportunity to visit Edmonton where I met them and interviewed them at a friend's home. A letter of explanation (see Appendix B) and a copy of their transcript were forwarded to them. I explained in the letter that if the interview transcript met their satisfaction, they did not need to send it back. However, if changes were needed to be made, they were encouraged to make the changes and explain their reasons before sending the material back to me. As it turned out, they chose not to reply which indicated that they were satisfied with their transcribed interview.

Three interviews took place in the participant's home and two in a friend's home while the other two occurred in my home. For five participants, the interview was conducted privately with no family members around. The other two interviews were conducted at a friend's home in a living room while other friends were in a different room. No intrusion occurred during the interviews.

All interviews lasted slightly less than an hour and all were videotaped. The participants decided on the mode of communication they felt comfortable to use in the interview (e.g., ASL, Signed English, oral). Six participants used sign language; two signed and spoke simultaneously. One participant chose oral communication. I am equally competent in conversing in ASL, contact signing and oral communication which was advantageous when communicating with participants for I was able to match the mode of communication preferred

by them.

I hired an experienced and certified interpreter to transcribe the videos to English print. Under the national and local interpreter Code of Ethics, the interpreter is bound to confidentiality. For all interviews with the exception of two, she either interpreted or transcribed the interviews via writing depending on the nature of the interviewee's communication. The other two interviews were voiced into a tape recorder. Then, she typed the written English into a computer from her written notes and her voiced messages from the tape recorder. This was done to the best of her ability. In some instances, she needed assistance with some segments from the tapes and would indicate this on the paper, for me to complete on my own time. After the completion of the transcribed interviews, she then reviewed the videotape for further accuracy as needed.

I reviewed all videotapes and transcriptions to ensure accuracy and consistency. In all interviewed transcriptions, I added some corrected information that was missed earlier. I also submitted my interpretations along with the interpreter's in some transcriptions. During the second meeting, the participants reviewed their transcript for accuracy and corrections. In most cases, all were satisfied with what they said. Three participants commented that the English was good, far better than they had thought. One participant deleted several segments arguing that she could not remember making these statements and supplied some of her own.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis follows closely with Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi's (1975) suggested process of thematic analysis of data. After reviewing the transcriptions with the participants, I reread each transcribed interview in order to get a gist for the data. I proceeded to add my thoughts as they occurred on the data. Then further notes were jotted down in my journal, some were reflections, and some were questions. As the transcriptions were entered into the computer, I opened files and added notes accordingly. These notes then became my secondary data.

In every interview, I extracted the meaning units and "tagged" or labelled them (the first two interviews were paraphrased before labelled with a tag). See Appendices C and D for an example. After grouping the tagged meaning units (clustering), I developed themes that reflected the participants' experiences identity-wise. The clusters of themes were then

synthesized into higher order themes for general descriptions of their experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The approval through application to the Department of Educational Psychology Ethics Review Committee, University of Alberta was granted before my research commenced.

It becomes critical that the ethical consideration be done with caution because in the Deaf community, small as it is, everyone knows everyone. With utmost care and ethical concern, the participants were given a consent form and were assured that the consent form would be kept in a secured location aside from transcripts and data that might identify them.

The participants were also assured that their participation was to be voluntary and that their identities would remain confidential in the study. The participants and I created fictional names for their names, places, schools, and other facts that would identify them. I found it necessary to keep gender, however, I have further changed and omitted other features that may identify the participants. I ensured that the changes made occurred without influencing the credibility of the data.

Importantly, the participants were informed that we would proceed with the understanding that at any time they wished, they could withdraw from the study without prejudice and that all data would be destroyed immediately.

Final Presentation

The data revealed five higher order themes. The themes are as follows after the introduction of the students' profile: 1) Participants' thoughts on identity, 2) Looking back at high school: The participants' perceptions of themselves, 3) Deafness as a part of self, 4) Surviving in the mainstream: The participants' coping mechanisms, and 5) Having someone to look up to: The participants' role models. Each theme contains issues or subthemes which are described in detail.

As the participants' stories are presented in Chapter Four, I have taken the liberty to make sure their exact words are used and have only rearranged the order of sentences for the ease of fitting together and providing a better reading. This was done with extreme care so the meanings are not obscured nor changed.

Chapter Five discusses and reflects on the findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to my experiences and to the research literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANTS' THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES

Treat a work of art like a prince. Let it speak to you first.
Arthur Schopenhauer

Introducing the Participants

The participants who were involved with this study are Max, Christine, Arthur, Lance, Emily, Kelley, and Sabrina. Each individual experienced mainstreaming throughout her/his school lives, excluding Christine and Sabrina who were only mainstreamed at junior and high school. Instead, Christine and Sabrina were students at an oral school for the deaf during their elementary years.

Each individual underwent some kind of a process that initially allowed her/him to shape and define who s/he was. The saga of defining and redefining her/himself continues to this very day. The participants who shared their stories, one by one, have embarked on a life-long journey in discovering themselves. Their personal signature of themselves as adults reflects a very complex and dynamic entity known as human being.

Following is a brief introduction to each participant illustrated in her/his own words to allow and assist us in seeing through her/his eyes where s/he was coming from, how s/he lived through her/his life, and perceived her/himself within the realm of the educational setting. In addition, included is the section of the participants' perception of themselves in high school and at university where they gave a current version of themselves.

Introduction to Max

Max is in his mid-twenties and currently is a university student doing graduate work in computer science. He was born deaf to a hearing family and is the only child in his family. He was raised in a signing environment where his parents signed and spoke simultaneously. He grew up being aware of the Deaf community and Deaf adults but was not directly involved with them until later in his adult years. He was the only deaf student in his elementary and high schools until he entered grade thirteen. During his school years, he used a sign language interpreter in class. He summarized his past background in education:

> I was a kid in another province, I would sit with a private tutor with other deaf kids, and we were tutored on sign, speech, reading, writing, basic education, etc. [My parents and I moved to another province to attend a residential school for the deaf]. I

went to a deaf school for two and a half years where I commuted and then transferred to a hearing school in grade three to grade eight, a private school and they accepted interpreters. The class learned a little bit of sign language and fingerspelling and they were skilled so we got along well. That continued until grade eight, but then I decided to transfer to a public high school in the country, which meant the kids in my class in grade eight and I were separated. I went to high school myself and I didn't know anyone in high school, so in high school, the first year was not bad. The education was great. The five years of high school education was great.

Well, for the first four years, grade nine to twelve, I was the only deaf student mainstreamed in my school, yes, then [when I was] in grade thirteen, there was one person, [a] deaf oral [student] - I used an interpreter, [a] sign language interpreter, different than she [as she was communicating orally which did not necessitate the need for interpreter], it wasn't the same, just, [because] I was in grade thirteen and she in grade nine, for any grade thirteeners we didn't socialize with grade niners that much.

I asked Max to describe himself while he was a high school student. In the following, he included his perception of himself identity-wise during high school, in his own words. He identified himself by using his name and showing other important characteristics.

"I have one thousand names."

Well, [it is a] good question [about asking me to define myself during high school] (*pause*). Really for myself, [I am] Max Xung and yes, I identify myself deaf, yes and well both deaf and hearing impaired, or either, whatever, it doesn't matter, but [I] knew I was not hard of hearing but deaf.

Later in the interview, he added more information about himself:

In high school identity-wise, to identify myself, it was many things, I can't pick one. I don't believe - a belief in myself as a person with one thousand names, a thousand identities, not only one, that's too limiting. Like, it was like, Lon Chaney, he's a famous actor from the past, a man with deaf parents who was famous for many movies, he was called "a man with a thousand faces". That's what I feel I have, one thousand names. I can't define myself in one way because it's many things.

Today, Max identifies himself as:

Well, during college, I would say deaf, but as my own person and I still hold that I am an individual first, and deaf comes later. I still hold to that.

To feel comfortable about each trait; it depends on the day, sometimes I'm comfortable interacting with one person, sometimes I interact with other people, [and] sometimes I'm comfortable on my own, being quiet. Sometimes I'm comfortable with my family identity. Sometimes [I'm comfortable with my] Deaf [identity] if people who, like sometimes deaf friends, or my interpreters or family who accept and recognize the Deaf world and are comfortable with that. And I think first and foremost, my name first, then Deaf identity, add to that, my background, football player, leader, smart guy.

Introduction to Christine

Christine is in her early twenties and is a third year university student. Like Max, she was born deaf to a hearing family and she is an only child. She grew up in an oral environment and attended an oral school for the deaf. After eight years of residential school in another country, she desired to be with her parents so she returned home and this time, permanently. Her parents then placed her in a school in her hometown where she was mainstreamed. For the first time in the history of her town, she established a precedent for other deaf students who wish to follow in her footsteps. Before she graduated, another deaf student was already at her school. Her first mainstreaming experience was intricately tough; however, as time progressed, she managed to cope as well as she could. To meet her communication needs, she used an oral interpreter in her high school. She explained descriptively about her background:

> I was born deaf, I don't know how I became deaf. Perhaps when my mom was pregnant and had problems with her pregnancy or something like that. So for my mom and dad, it was a normal day, but my mom noticed something was wrong with me. I was sitting quiet, I was a quiet baby. My dad had two other kids from another marriage and he noticed they would play and make noises at six months old, but I was quiet. My mom thought, so what, but my dad thought they should take me to the doctors and check if I was ok or not. So they went to the doctors and checked and found that I was deaf. My mom said, "really, oh, God no", but she said ok, don't worry, they'd check and get help for me.
>
> So we were sent to the hospital, Rosey Hospital and so they checked me out with different tests to see what kind of hearing loss I had. But the tests were not conclusive so they sent me to Mac Guyver University and I went there when I was about two years old. My mom drove me and we met the highly reputable practitioner. They talked and the practitioner preformed some tests and through that process they found I was profoundly deaf. So they said, fine, and accepted that and my mom said she believed she could teach me to talk. So they started teaching, trying to teach me at about one year old. They would clap and do easy things like that, with simple vocabulary and then next I was fitted for hearing aids and so on. So ok, there was no problem and for six months we were at Montgomery [where Mac Guyver Hospital is located] and then came back home and then we went to Rosey hospital and [I had to] learn vocabulary and [I also had to learn] to speak but my mom - the practitioner said the vocabulary and speech were not good enough. I needed to improve so my mom said ok, fine and we went back to the medical centre and my mom said from all the choices [they knew], which is the best school to teach me speech reading, reading and general education.
>
> There were three schools, Mississauga, Orange Tower and St. Claire, and [my parents] checked them all out and picked RIPD in St. Claire, so I went there. I stayed at RIPD from the age of three to eleven [for] eight years. And after that, I went to a mainstreamed hearing school [in my province]. Yes, I was eleven years old [at that time] and (*pause*) RIPD wanted to place me in grade four but my new school said

grade four was not good. Grade five was good because [I was good in] math, social studies and so on, [so] I was [placed] at the grade five level, [but] reading was [in] grade three which was so-so, but I went into grade five which was fine.

At first it was tough being mainstreamed, getting used to the class, you know. The American perspective and things, then getting used to the Canadian perspective in comparison. The process was frustrating but I had a good teacher, Mr. McDoodle. He seemed to understand - he understood. My parents said to him, no tokenism, "you must teach my daughter". So, ok, my teacher said ok, he'd teach me the different courses.

I had to accept the FM system and things went along but in grade seven I hated the FM system. It bothered me and the teacher would forget to use it and treated me like a hearing person. The teacher would forget it was on when going to the bathroom, I'd hear what was going on in the bathroom, the flushing, and so on, it was embarrassing. It was frustrating.

Yes, [I was] the only deaf student in [my junior high] school - the first in that area. Well, [I find now] it's awkward, because back then, because I thought it was cool being the first deaf person, but now that I'm older, I feel awkward. Yes, I set up a precedent at that school system and now there is another deaf student there and they know what to do and that student is oral too. There's a problem with his mother and him, anyway, for me, I set up the precedent, which was fine, no problem for me.

Next, Christine shared her perception of herself in high school. She remembered that she was told feverently to use specific words to describe herself through her hearing status. In the following, her description of herself is given.

"It's what they told me to use."

Oral, if I say, if I, I'd say I was hearing impaired...Hearing impaired feels like they say, well, like I know I had identity underneath, RIPD [school] say hearing impaired is more polite and deaf is to be avoided. I kind of accepted it when they would say you have to fit in the real world - hearing - and you need to talk to communicate, but if I were deaf, it would be awkward and they'd give me a hard time. I accept what they said but at home I had problems in grade five. I made behaviour adjustments, I communicate with my parents a lot and I realized hearing impaired, I didn't like it. It's what they told me to use, [even though] it wasn't me...

Today she projects herself as:

My name is Christine Zoey Hakly and I'm twenty-one years old. I'm a university student and that's me.

Introduction to Arthur

Arthur is in his mid-twenties and just graduated from university recently. He was born deaf to a hearing family and is the last child after his three hearing siblings. He grew up in a signed English environment. His mother and siblings communicated through sign language while his father communicated via fingerspelling. At school, he was the only deaf student and

he was very actively involved with various activities. He enjoyed his school experiences and excelled in academics. His mother was his interpreter until grade nine when a professional interpreter replaced his mother. Speaking about his background, he said:

> I was born deaf. My mother had German measles and then I was born. I entered, first a deaf school, first, at about three or four years old and then I moved to another place and I went to another school there, where I was first mainstreamed. Yes, mainstreamed as the only deaf person there, and I have been ever since - I'm still mainstreamed. I was there from kindergarten to grade twelve and have always been mainstreamed. You should know that my mom was my interpreter until grade nine after which I had a professional interpreter, which I still have at the University, at Freeb University.
>
> My family, well, like there are four of us, I'm the baby. Next is my sister, then a brother and the oldest is another sister. My oldest sister and brother can sign and my younger sister signs very well.
>
> By sign, I mean very basic communication, enough to understand what they're saying, which is backed up with speech. They can sign so that I can understand and it's reinforced with speech and gesturing. My second sister is a fluent signer, we can talk about any issue - we joke around a lot; she's a very fluent signer. And then, there's me which you know about. My mom is an interpreter and growing up, she signed English until now. I'm trying to influence her to change to ASL where she can add more facial grammar, expression and all the subtle nuances of ASL. My father, he just fingerspells. So that is my family. I believe you asked about my friends - they were all hearing until about seven years ago when I started interacting with deaf people. Oh, I had one friend, who was deaf, we grew up together and have been friends over the years. That person was the first friend I had at three or four years old and have been friends since then. Now again, I met him/her seven years ago, and after growing up, we're good friends again, we really get along and communicate well together.
>
> My experience related to education was terrific - mostly I was in honours courses. I breezed through it because the interpreter was good, I could keep up, there was no problem. Education was not a problem. In fact, I was student council president in high school. I was voted in over one thousand and two hundred hearing students. Plus, I was a rep for a number of things in high school. I was involved and won a contest in the Science Fair. Also, I was involved with the Math Club and so on.

Next is Arthur's perception of himself in high school. He grew up with no choices in deciding who he was. He only followed his hearing peers at school and that was all there was to it.

> <u>"I had no choice, I was Hearing."</u>
>
> But during high school, I had no choice, no other choice. I was Hearing, that was it, period. The issue of Hearing identity; it means, I interact with hearing people, period. I had no choice, I didn't know I had other choices, for example, I didn't know there were other choices. That identity depended on the choices that were available in front of me at the time.

I fit with the hearing people. I didn't think about fitting in with [my hearing peers]. I had no choice.

Today, he views himself as:

> Now, I am Deaf. Deaf means values, which includes many things. I could define values as culture and define the language, the linguistics of ASL, building a future for Deaf for the Deaf Way, that's all.
>
> Knowing who I am, my high school friends knew what happened to me, it was amazing, it changed me, it opened up my eyes. I told them and they understood about the Deaf community and they supported the fact that I found myself.

Introduction to Emily

Emily is in her mid-twenties and is in her fourth year at the university. Emily was born hearing and is the last child of eight hearing children. She became deafened around the age of five due to spinal meningitis and every year, after the prognosis, her hearing loss worsened progressively. Unlike many deaf children, she had the language grounded in her. Typically as with other deafened children, she was not aware of her deafness until she encountered a situation with her mother:

> I didn't understand what was going on. Like, nobody sat me down and explained it to me. I wish they had, but I can remember my mother asking me for something. I was wandering around the room, picking things up and saying, "want that?", "want that?" and my mom going, "no, no, I want that". She was saying it over and over again and I just didn't hear her. My mom really noticed something was wrong here so she had my hearing checked. And I had a seventy decibel loss in my left ear already. The other one, I don't know. That was my best ear at that time, but now, it's worse. It started to get worse and by the time I was ten, my hearing loss was about the same as it is now - profoundly deaf. So at that time, no one was explaining things to me. All I knew was I was boosting up the volume and I was relying on the hearing aid more and more. And I was getting more and more lost in the class, because I was losing my hearing faster than I was developing my lip reading skills! It was a very confusing time period for me at that age.
>
> By the time Christmas rolled around or a little bit afterwards, I had a nervous breakdown. It got harder and harder to force me to go to school and , one morning, I just couldn't do it. I just broke down and cried and my mom thought - she didn't understand where I was coming from. My mom, not at first, she didn't really understand at first. I think stress contributed to the nervous breakdown.

That was the starting point of her life transformation. Her mother then sent Emily out of province to another school, this time a deaf school. Emily expanded further about her background in education:

> In grade eight, I had a nervous breakdown, so my mom decided it was best to send me to a deaf school. She sent me to Timish because that is the only one she

knew of. And before [the school for the deaf] lets you in, in the fall, they evaluate you - where you are socially and intellectually and the psychologist at that time said I was gifted. And so because I was too advanced for the deaf school, they decided to let me live in the dorm, then put me on their off campus program. I stayed in the dorm during the evening, but during the day I was mainstreamed in a high school. Education was good because the quality of education was very high - I went to the best hearing school in Timish [named] Mount Carmel Secondary. It was a good school, I had tutoring support, but most of the time I didn't need it. School was easy for me most of the time.

At that time, in the beginning I was not the only deaf student at my school because there were a couple of others from the deaf school as well, and then they left. Then for about five years - the first year, there was a few others - about four or five of us were together. Year two, three, I was by myself. In the fourth year, a few more, and year five a lot more younger ones were coming in to grade nine. The only time that I shared a class with deaf students was grade nine science, that was it. Most of the time I was by myself with my class mates. I was mainstreamed completely and I had social problems. Even though academically, I was doing ok, but social problems kept popping up.

Well, I had tutoring if it was necessary. And then later when my signing skills got better and when my tutor had time, once in a while, would interpret for films. That happened during my junior, senior years, but not at the beginning, I didn't have enough sign language skills to do that.

I communicated via lipreading [at first, when I didn't know sign language]. The FM system (*pause*), not that it helped that much, I didn't have that much hearing really. All the time I have been using FM system except my last semester and then I had one course only, and that was English, that I needed to graduate. And the teacher knew that in college I wouldn't need the FM system so she weaned me off of it. Sometimes she wouldn't put it on, or put it on for a short time and take it off and towards the end, the last two months of school, I was not wearing it at all. Using FM system didn't bother me really. I mean I hated it at first 'cause the first one I had, I wore on the chest and then later the deaf school got new ones. They were smaller and worn at the side by the belt, it was a small one, it wasn't a problem.

In the following, Emily described herself in her own words in high school. During high school, she did not belong to any group and found it a very confusing experience.

<u>"I don't belong."</u>

In the beginning of identifying myself, I suspect it was very confusing - Who am I? I mean I was fourteen before I met my first deaf person.

I was [still] confused, [after being in the deaf residential school for the deaf for one year] I realized I don't belong in the deaf world, I don't belong in the hearing, where do I fit? My friend Ashley Simeon and I discussed that a lot. We would say it was like walking on a knife's edge. One mistake, you slip, and you get cut badly by someone on either side. Someone always pointing their finger at you. If you say something about deaf, hearing are mad at you, if you say about hearing, deaf are mad at you. I was stuck in the middle.

Currently, she says:

> Me, I'm Emily Hiquist. I'm myself, I belong to myself. I feel good about myself, you know. I'd say my identity is more of a hard of hearing perspective. [But really] I'm a real mix, I just draw it all together - from the hearing, from the deaf and the hard of hearing perspective - calling them all together, making your own world sometimes, if necessary.
>
> A mesh-mash I don't know I just call it that name. Mesh-mash. I just call it me. It was just me, I felt it was just Emily Hiquist, that's who she is.

Introduction to Lance

Lance is in his early twenties and has taken a year off from university. He plans to enrol in the fall and would be in his third year. He was born deaf and is the third child with three hearing siblings. His parents are deaf and use ASL at home. At school, he did not use any support service, not even an interpreter. Instead he communicated either orally or by writing. He explained his background:

> To start with myself, I was born. My parents had four kids. First, there was my brother who was hearing, then my sister, who was hearing, then me, and then my youngest brother was born. What happened was my mother called my name, Lance, and I slowly turned my head to look and my mother thought I was a bit slow and had some concerns and told my grandmother about it. My grandmother said it was normal and that I was just slow. My mom wasn't satisfied but things continued until I was two and a half, when my mom called my name again and I was still slow in responding. She decided to try to teach me to respond and finally sent me to an audiologist, who found that in fact, I was deaf - after two and a half years - my parents were shocked at the discovery.
>
> So they decided to sent me to a deaf school, a day class. Not a deaf school, but a deaf day class from two and a half to six years old. I mean a deaf day class, where there was one self-contained class in a hearing school, not a deaf school. It was near my home which was fine. So I learned different things, like, how to lipread and when it was time for me to go to grade school, my parents decided to send me to a mainstreamed school for grade one. I had a question, I wondered why my parents picked a mainstreamed school for me. I didn't ask them at that time, but later [I did].
>
> At that time, I was in high school when I asked my parents. Really, I never gave much thought as to why I was in a mainstreamed class. So I went to this mainstreamed school, and passed all my classes. It's interesting, my siblings failed their classes, but I was able to pass all of my courses. After I graduated, I went back to high school. It was a really stupid reason, but I went back because I missed the socializing with students in high school. I wanted to socialize, and I was able to do so until I graduated. I was in an isolated mainstreamed setting. Meaning I was the only deaf student in the school - there were no other deaf students there upon my graduation.
>
> No, well really the FM system I used was from grade one to seven. The FM system was just like noise to me, I had to identify what the sounds were and I couldn't understand speech. I never wanted to use it but they said I had to use it. Xavier

[school] was responsible for the FM system. Xavier, a deaf school, a deaf institution in New Brunswick. They said I was required to use one, but I protested and gave it back. They relented.

Below is Lance's perception of himself in high school. He identified himself through his brother Rohan and hence developed a view of himself as a Hearing individual pursuing academics.

"Rohan's brother."

Well I know that they called me Rohan's brother, period. Deaf [or] hard of hearing, they never said that, never! The teachers never said it. I would say there was respect there, the term disability, or hearing loss was never the point....[but] most of the time I hated to be identified as Rohan's brother - my brother's name is Rohan....

Going through high school, I saw myself as a Hearing person, and no one viewed me as different.

Today, he says:

I'm deaf, Deaf now, that is my identity. Right now - DEAF.

Introduction to Kelley

Kelley is in her mid-twenties doing graduate work in technology. She was born deaf and has one younger hearing sibling. Her parents discovered her deafness at an early age after their growing concerns and suspicions. Her mother then became heavily involved in researching deafness. Kelley recalled a fleeting moment from her past on how the identification of her hearing loss came to be.

[My parents] found I was deaf when, I don't remember how many years old, maybe I was one year old, just a baby. They took me to many different doctors and they had many different stories about what was wrong with me until they realized what it was. My mother became more and more involved researching deafness, the experience and so on. She went to the university and did research there.

Kelley was the only deaf student in her school until her third year where other deaf students entered. She did not use or ask for services in her classes. Similar to Lance, she communicated orally with her peers. She explained her educational background:

I went to the same high school for three years - mainstreamed. I was the only student in the first year, yes, the second, third, - sorry, the first and second year in grade ten and eleven, yes. Grade twelve there were more deaf [students] that joined but they were separate from me, but we became friends anyway. So I was mainstreamed and I was the only person, deaf person in the classroom.

I did not use any services, no FM system, interpreters, nothing. So I communicated with my peers by speech. We spoke and wrote. They were really good

friends and we had many conversations and they understood my speech, so it was not a problem for me.

Below, in her own words, Kelley illustrated her perception of herself in high school. Her reflections of her identity depended on the situation.

"It depended on the situation."

> How did I perceive myself? (*a long pause*) It depends on the situation! (*chuckling*) In high school only? A quiet person in high school. [At] best, [I was] not ashamed [of who I was]. It was a long time ago (*pause*). Ok, I guess I should be more involved in high school activities but I didn't go. So, it was more like that.

Now, she says:

> who am I? I am! (*chuckling*). Ok (*pause*) to tell you about myself, I would say I'm doing graduate work at the university - what else - I'm involved with sports, basically that's it.
>
> No, I was not the same person now as I was in high school. Not at all --yes, there have been a lot of changes. The university has many different types of people and the pressure too. The last two years was really, really hard especially with the pressure, it was bad. That changed a person of course. I learned, like, how to be under pressure and what to do with that. I took one year off and I worked at four different jobs and that changed me a lot too. How? (*contemplative pause*) more like [the] time away from the pressure to develop more as a person. Like having different experiences that people don't normally find at a university, it's a very different taste there but both of those things changed me. More, not the basic person, but more of my perspective and understanding of other people.

Introduction to Sabrina

Sabrina is in her early twenties and is in her second year of university. She was born to a hearing family and is the youngest child. She has an older sibling. She communicated with her family orally. She went to Europe for her elementary schooling where she learned to speak along with other oral deaf students. Upon graduation, she moved back to live with her parents and was mainstreamed thereafter. It was both her parents and her decision to be mainstreamed at a local school. She was the only deaf student at her high school. During class, she used interpreters, however, they were not professionally trained.

She had mixed feelings about her mainstreaming experience. It was a profound change for her as she made the transition from a deaf school to a hearing environment. Speaking about her background, she explained:

> How did my parents find out I was deaf? Well, how I became deaf is a total mystery to my parents. I was born at the hospital in 1975. I was born - I was born deaf. Well - well - my parents suspected when I was, when I didn't answer to them

when they called me or I didn't respond to their questions. I think I was (*pause*) I was fifteen months old when they felt something funny was going on. So they sent me to the doctor to see what's wrong with me, that the doctor realized that was because I'm deaf and my parents were upset like other parents.

The school I went to was Penny Hilton school. I went to a deaf oral school in Europe. That school is called Penny Hilton School. I stayed there for ten years, and that was a long time. I went into mainstreaming after my graduation. [It was] my parents' decision and mine too. I basically wanted to go into mainstreaming after graduation because I felt confident enough to go into a mainstream and I had ten years of experience of speech therapy and I had some hearing friends, so that had a lot to do with it.

It was, it was really tough at first. It was very tough at first. When I first went into mainstreaming I was in eighth grade, I was in eighth grade so, it was tough because, because prior to the big change, I was with deaf for ten years straight. So I was removed from that environment and placed in a 'hearing world' and so it was very big change and at first. I had mixed feelings. I felt I was looking forward, but part of me was looking forward to the change but another part of me felt really awkward because, because it was a big change.

Education was tough because I had no interpreter. Not in junior high or high school. No, I had only a school aide. But she never was in the class except on a few occasions, actually. But I did have notetakers. And it was, I had to sit in class and just do nothing because I was unable to follow the teacher, follow the class discussions.

I was the only deaf person in that school all the way to grade twelve. Oh, when I was in grade twelve, I heard there was a deaf boy in my high school but I did not know him. He was in tenth grade so I didn't see him at all.

I have to explain a little bit about the interpreters. Because, when I was in high school, I did have interpreters but they weren't professionally trained interpreters. My aide, my school aide would find high school students in my high school who are willing to volunteer to interpret for me. And I would have to meet them and see if it was easy for me to lipread them. But I realized it was better than nothing because the school board wasn't willing to fund for professional interpreters so I had to be happy with the students as interpreters, I (*pause*) I thought it was better than nothing. But I still feel, I have some reservations about volunteers because first, they were not professionally trained, and second of all, they didn't tell me every single word that teachers said, they would only tell me the specifics. Only the important messages, you know. And I didn't like that so, but it was still better than nothing.

Next is Sabrina's perception of herself as a high school student. She saw herself as a deaf person because that was all she could think about while she was at school.

<u>"I saw myself as a 'deaf' person."</u>

I mean, well, at school I saw myself as a "deaf" person because it was all I thought about. Because that had to do with school that you can't help it and stop thinking that you're deaf. I was in a new group at school but when I'm at home, I'm a totally different person, at home, I'm being me...

Today she projects herself as:

> Who am I? - I'm a very complicated person. So, yeah, I'm just Sabrina Taylor, I'm not just a deaf person, I'm not a hearing person...

All participants provided a clear and cohesive description of themselves during and after their high school years. Even though their brief family and educational background colour the essence of who they were and are today, all participants acknowledged the fact that they are different people today than they were in the past.

Five participants envisioned themselves through their hearing status in determining who they were. In other words, their identity revolved around the status of what hearing they had. For instance, Arthur and Lance viewed themselves Hearing while Christine viewed herself as orally hearing impaired and Emily was caught in the middle of the two worlds, hearing and Deaf. Sabrina could not help but think about her deafness all the time. The other two participants, Max and Kelley, appeared to focus more on the inner qualities of who they were than on their hearing status.

It is inevitable and perhaps unavoidable that today they create a different panorama of themselves. Currently, all see themselves as persons with qualities important to each individual; the importance of their hearing status appears to have changed. Although they appear to recognize that they are deaf individuals, they no longer find that deafness is a significant quality when they define themselves. Today, Kelley, Max, Christine, Emily, and Sabrina identify themselves by their names and the inner qualities while Lance and Arthur accept the cultural definition of Deaf identity when identifying themselves.

While all of the participants underwent identity development, they sought what was meaningful to them and with what they had, they tried to make sense out of it identity-wise. The process of identity development is, evidently, a very complex one.

In the following theme, the participants shared their thoughts about the definition of identity. All appeared to understand the underlying meaning of identity.

THEME ONE: Participants' Thoughts on Identity

I think that to find meanings you have to look at things from different directions.
Bev Doolittle

The participants were asked to share and define their definition of identity because I

felt they were maturely capable of answering it. All are adults with more than two years of university under their belt. They were exposed to innumerable university experiences and all had passed the required psychology courses that explored the general study of mind.

What is Identity?

The fundamental question of "what is identity" posed a challenge to the participants as they attempted to define it in their own words. While they are not scholars or experts on the topic of identity, their life experiences enabled them to reflect a surprisingly clear and educated response in terms of defining identity. All appeared to appreciate the complexities of defining and understanding the term "identity". As participants defined identity, there were noticeable differences among their definitions. Some attributed it as the quality of a person while others said it is knowing who you are. One participant viewed it as an actionary quality of what people do with their lives. Their contributed definitions are worthy of inspection because they correlated to the participants' making sense of themselves.

Max illuminated the definition of identity in his own words. He felt strongly that identity is related to the whole essence of the person with a given criteria.

> Identity means how you define yourself; what criteria define a person. [It is a very] good question. Identity is more related to (*pause*) background. Where you came from related to ethnic, race, creed, gender, or culture, community affiliation, and so on.

Lance, on the other hand, provided another view of looking at identity. He defined it more as an actionary essence of which people do with their lives. "It's how you deal with your life. I mean, if your priorities are what you do with your life. So, my definition comes from what people do and what they know."

Arthur added a different point of view of identity in terms of a single attribute: the degree of self-esteem.

> My definition of identity is that the identity really depends on my perception on the degree of self-esteem. Such as having no confidence, which, means you have a mixed up identity. With a high percent of confidence, it means one knows their identity, their own identity, and decide what it is.

Three participants, Sabrina, Emily, and Christine, echoed a similar response to the definition that identity is: "knowing who you are". Their definition is similar to Max's, however, Emily pointed out: "How you view the world [in regards to identity] is how you connect with the world." In addition, Sabrina revealed further: "...regardless of your deafness

or any other kind of handicap. Like clothes or the colour of your skin, it's the person of who you are."

In retrospect, Kelley questioned the meaning of identity and quickly emphasized that there are many definitions available on identity. To define identity in one sentence does a lot to undermine the real understanding of the definition. She clearly viewed it as a difficult phenomenon to describe because she felt it depended on the situation, nonewithstanding, she provided a workable definition. She described it more as a social perspective of oneself that depended on the situation.

> What do you mean to define identity? Do you mean like image? There's many different meanings, it is just hard to explain. Ok, the definition of identity depends - how you talk, and how people look at you, how you feel about yourself and so on. It's hard for me to answer in one sentence. (*A long pause*) ok, I guess, it's a mixture - how people perceive you; how do you feel about yourself - really it depends on the situation.

Although the participants revealed a current working definition of identity meaningful to them, many did acknowledge that it is highly improbable for them to either provide a definition of identity or to examine identity per se as high school students. Instead, they were busy preparing themselves in becoming teenagers. According to Max, during high school he would not have the words to define the definition of identity or have the thoughts about identity per se. "For me, to define the word 'identity' itself, I never thought of the word "identity", so I can't answer that." Similarly, Lance reinforced the concept of not thinking about identity during high school. "Really, did I think about identity? Not really...you need to understand that I wasn't busy focusing on my identity while I was growing up. At that time, I was busy with school and how to get along in life, that's all." Christine is another participant who admitted that she did not ruminate about her identity while she was a high school student. She mused, "I haven't analyzed [my identity] because I [wasn't able to do so]." The rest of the participants did not reflect on that issue which may indicate and reinforce the significant notion that they were busily preparing themselves in accepting the responsibility of becoming adolescents.

Despite the lack of having the literal words or thoughts about identity per se, they instinctively apprehended who they were and who their friends were. The next theme illustrates how the participants viewed themselves during high school.

THEME TWO: The Participants' Perceptions of Themselves: Looking Back at High School

There are only two ways to live your life.
One is as though nothing is a miracle.
The other is as though everything is a miracle.
Albert Einstein

All participants as high school students were keenly aware of their high school's educational, social and personal experiences. These experiences moulded and influenced the essence of their inner beings unconsciously and consciously. They struggled to know who they were, to find themselves, and to be comfortable with their own identity. The following is a brief look at the process they appeared to undergo which emerged from the analysis and a review of their perception of themselves. The identities of the participants are given in the introductory chapter and again, their perceptions of themselves are given here briefly.

The Process of Self

As the participants shared their high school experiences, there were subtle hints that suggested an infancy in regards to the process of identity development. Even though their identity developed as early as the onset of birth, the journey of scrutinizing themselves occurred when they were more mature in accepting the task of scrutinizing themselves cognitively, psychologically, emotionally and socially.

While they underwent the process of developing their identity consciously and unconsciously, they appeared to be aware of their own search of themselves. The journey of discovering themselves commenced during their early teens and it carried them through to their later years. They instinctively knew that they had begun the process.

As with other adolescents, regardless of their hearing status, they went through many periods of struggles and confusion during their identity development. Max was one participant who, although he knew he had identity, was still discovering it. Even though he firmly believed that he acquired his identity from his family and his experiences growing up, his journey in developing identity was a challenge for him. Along his journey, he faced and experienced many struggles with his own identity. He stressed that in his opinion, the process of identity development was a normal experience for anyone to go through and that deaf people were no exceptions.

> Really like a normal teenager, I struggled with identity. So I can't say I already have established identity, I'm still developing it the same as any normal teenager, still developing it. That's why [Erik] Erickson himself said "Teenage time, identity

> formation versus identity diffusion." So, try to develop (*pause*) go through developing identity, but it's there.
>
> Well, I would say that for each individual it is different. For me, I acquired my identity from my family and from my experiences growing up....

Lance supported the idea that generally families do have an influence on children's lives and that they may assist the children's growing-up years as they mature into adults. Lance's parents supported him with his identity development while he was growing up, "...my parents helped [me in] developing my identity..." Apparently, the family involvement was critical for both Max and Lance in regards to their identity development and process.

Kelley did not elaborately describe this process, however, she showed an indication that her identity process commenced as she sought and explored the values. She was on the path of discovery toward herself through the exploration of values and belief systems. "(*Chuckling*) I guess in high school, I was more like exploring my values. Finding which would do for me."

Emily, too, underwent a process of identifying herself. She was unsure of who she was as she became adolescent. She was confused about who she was and later became uncomfortable not knowing her own identity. She remembered a time when she was in grade eight, she vociferously located books about deaf people so that she would read about deafness and not feel alone in her experience. She then began to visualize the dream of meeting deaf people. The opportunity came a year later when she was transferred to a residential school for the deaf. The experience of her first encounter with deaf people overwhelmed her immensely as she met not one deaf individual but many deaf students all at once in a dorm. At that point, she realized something about herself, that she grew up with an attitude that spoken language is superior.

> In the beginning of identifying myself, I suspect it was very confusing - Who am I? I mean I was fourteen before I met my first deaf person. It was like (*pause*) it blew my mind, ok. I went into the deaf dorm for the first time and I saw all these hands moving all over the place. I grew up with the attitude that being oral was better.

Sabrina experienced a confusing stage known as identity crisis. She knew as soon as she came into contact with her identity crisis that she had begun the process of searching for herself. In her opinion, she was going through this experience because she was different because she was deaf and that she was the only deaf person at her school.

> ...I was going through an identity crisis in junior high and then high school.

> My deafness has a lot to do with that because I was in my teenager years, so I was going through the same thing as the other people. Like an example would be, what your feeling is, (*pause*) or how you dress, or having to prove yourself in sports or in academics or whatever. But I think that was different for me because I had my deafness. I was different because I was deaf for one thing. And, and (*pause*) I was the only deaf person....

A Snapshot of Self

All of the participants provided a snapshot of who they were during the adolescent years. Their view of themselves differs. Some view themselves as persons while others view themselves as Hearing individuals trying to fit with their hearing peers during in classes. One participant could not escape the thoughts about her deafness and ended up thinking about it all the time.

Max took pride in himself for knowing who he was. He felt that sign language, family involvement and interactions with people gave him a personal sense of who he was and still is. He identified himself by his personal characteristics with a minimal importance on deafness. Later in the interview, Max vehemently emphasized that his identity is complex and to pinpoint a specific trait does limit the qualities of who he was. As mentioned earlier, Max believed that he possessed one thousand identities which give him the wholeness he is trying to achieve through his explanation.

Upon Emily's entrance to high school, she was socially deprived and isolated from her elementary class peers. Emily did not have a positive experience with her self-image and she ignored her environment including the people around her. Luckily, at the end of her high school year, she was more aware of who she was.

> Well, I think part of it, I did and part of it, I didn't know about who I was. Socially I was isolated. I tuned out my environment like you wouldn't believe. I was almost autistic at times - ok! Isolated - the world is over there and I'm here. That's the way - that's how I entered high school. I was like that when I started high school and it took a long time to break down all those barriers. Like I said, I had big 'keep away' poster signs all over me. It took five years of high school to break them down.

After her one year stay at the residential dormitory, during which Emily was exposed to deaf and hard of hearing students and identity-wise, she felt she did not belong to any group at first. She tried to fit into the deaf group but felt tremendous pressure from the hearing so she switched sides and the pressure from the deaf was excruciating. Gradually, her observations have led her to the conclusion that she is between the bipolar sides.

Lance, on the other hand, viewed himself as a Hearing person who was not much

different from his classmates. At times, his peers would call him as "Rohan's brother" since his brother was in his class. He adamantly pointed out the fact that his teachers and peers never referred to him by his hearing status. He attributed not being called deaf to being treated with great respect by others.

Arthur too viewed himself as a Hearing person. He interacted with hearing peers all his life and it never occurred to him that there were other options identity-wise. Nevertheless, he excelled in academics and made the honour roll for several years. He coped as best as he could in that circumstance.

> My identity while growing up was Hearing even though [I had] a hearing aid which I wore on the right ear but,...[b]ut during high school, I had no choice, no other choice. I was Hearing, that was it, period. The issue of Hearing identity [which] means, I interact with hearing people, period. I had no choice, I didn't know I had other choices, for example, I didn't know there were other choices. That identity depended on the choices that were available in front of me at the time. I didn't know what Hearing identity really meant. I knew who I was. I was decidedly "Hearing", that I was confident, and I received honours marks for several years in a row, averaging ninety percent.

Kelley pondered about her own identity and strongly opined that her identity depended on the situation. At best, she was a quiet person who studied hard and was also a competitive athlete outside of high school. She knew she was the kind of person who liked to be involved with many different activities and interests.

> That's a tough one! I can't - like a person in high school, that's me at that time. A competitive athlete, plus a person who enjoys being involved in many, many different things. I studied seriously. I've change a bit, I'm not sure by how much though, I'm not sure!

Sabrina viewed herself as a "deaf" person because that was all she thought about in school despite her feeling comfortable about herself at home. While she was at school, her feelings were guarded and she did not want people to know her weaknesses. Consequently, she always put a smile on her face even though she was screaming inside, tormenting herself needlessly. She went through an identity crisis because of her deafness which caused people to make her feel like an alien. In other words, people could not see beyond her deafness and discover a person inside her.

> I mean, well, at school I saw myself as a "deaf" person because it was all I thought about. Because that's had to do with school that you can't help it and stop thinking that you're deaf. I was in a new group at school but when I'm at home, I'm a totally different person, at home, I'm being me (*pause*) I like myself so, at school I

was always on guard. I didn't want other people to know I had so many weaknesses - you know - I didn't want other people to think that I'm insecure. So of course, of course I would always respond optimistically, be cheerful [but] I didn't want [to do it all the time]. Inside, inside I felt I wasn't really happy because it was difficult to keep smiling, or be optimistic for a long time. Inside it was excruciating - am I saying it right?

And that made me feel like an alien, you know, an alien. I understand people, a lot of people were friendly to me but I see that they couldn't see past my deafness to see the person inside me. So that [is because] not many people notice that, but that's how I see it but right now they were not really interested, because they, you know, didn't do that with other people.

Christine considered herself as a hearing impaired person because that was the term she was told to use when she was in the hearing world. She also indicated that she was not comfortable in using the term "hearing impaired" when she knew all along that she was a deaf person. Through her experience with her family and mainstreaming, she realized that she had begun searching for herself.

Comfort Level

When I asked the participants about how comfortable they were with their identity during high school, all responded that, at first, they were not completely comfortable with the situations that affected their own identity. As they sought to understand situations and themselves, they became more used to who they were and they then became more comfortable with themselves. Kelley responded "Yes, I am comfortable with my identity [now, but in the past I was not as comfortable as I am now in terms of who I am]". It is apparent that the university experiences do appear to bring them more acceptance of themselves and allow them to be more comfortable with who they are.

Max recalled his experiences that led him to feel uncomfortable with his identity. He realized that he was very self-conscious when wearing an FM system in class and that gave him the feeling of being different from his peers. He was not comfortable with the idea of him being different from his peers. He was also uncomfortable with himself being different from others. As he matured to grade twelve and thirteen, his acceptance of who he was grew as he participated in groups who accepted him more than those who did not, however, he was still conscious about it.

Well, let me think about it (*pause*). I admit one thing when I was in grade ten, I needed to...grade nine to ten, I had to wear an FM system, In grade nine, it didn't really bother me that much, but in grade ten, I was more self conscious, so I wasn't

comfortable with that, with everyone staring at me. What I didn't like was feeling different from others. I didn't belong with the rest of them. I felt like I was the outsider and that was not comfortable for me. But for grades twelve, thirteen, things improved.

And then in grade twelve, I was more comfortable with myself, it made me think that it made people more comfortable with me. I noticed that if I'm not comfortable with myself, others can't be comfortable with me. So if I'm comfortable with myself and they're comfortable with me, if there's a person who has a problem, then screw-them. I'm not worried, I'm not going to, well, I don't bother with them anymore.

Kelley appeared to be more hesitant about discussing her identity experiences, "You mean what I said before about how comfortable I am talking about the issue of identity? It depends. That's a hard question to ask, but as it's going now, I feel fine." Kelley continued on saying:

> Well in high school it was always changing as it does with teenagers. That's a normal - what's the sign for that - the struggles the teenagers growing up, but I didn't go outside of that. Ok (*long pause*) I was more into myself [than my relationship to] other people, the relationship with other people, social situations and so on. And also, I was learning how to enjoy myself with hearing friends in groups, that was tough and learning a lot about the skills helped me get here.

Kelley was learning the skills to enjoy herself more with her hearing peers. She later added that she was very comfortable interacting with different people and groups, "I feel comfortable about fitting with different people, not just with one group. Lots of different ones."

Arthur, in retrospect, said that he considered himself Hearing and that he would not introduce his deafness to a stranger or a friend unless both parties misunderstood each other. However, he emphasized that his deafness was not related to identity but disability, "Well, I know that I explain that I am deaf, but not Deaf as it relates to identity - [but] deaf as it relates to a disability. At that time, it was a disability, now it's not. To explain more about the disability in the past, it is the barriers, stupid barriers. Being deaf was a barrier for me, like having a hearing aid meant the disability was a barrier." He then elaborated on how he felt about his identity.

> No, I didn't like being disabled at that time, the hearing aid was attached to a devise worn on the chest which was connected by wires to the hearing aid. I threw it away many times, I wrecked it, threw it down the toilet many times because I still didn't understand why I needed it in the first place. I didn't know or understand why. But related to identity in high school, back then, I was really Hearing, now I'm not.
>
> I felt comfortable with the idea of my being Hearing, yes, [but] now [that] I've

started to change. In the past two or three years, things got really mixed up. The mixed up situation happened, well, in the last couple of years, [and] things became very confusing, I wasn't used to switching identities, it was confusing, (*pause*) [anyhow] I knew that I could switch back and forth.

Looking from my perspective on my happiness, I don't know, I thought I was happy before. During high school, I didn't think there was anything wrong, I didn't know there was any problem. But then as time changed, I realized I wasn't happy [after the incident at the task force meeting about interpreters] occurred.

Most of the participants did not directly express their comfort level with their identity however, many do recall social and personal experiences that brought forth uncomfortableness, and, in a few cases, pleasantness. The level of comfort appeared to be directly associated with external cues such as people being comfortable with them, not them being comfortable by themselves. Sometimes, when they are comfortable with themselves which can only happen after a change.

A Life-Altering Experience

Arthur experienced a disruptive change four years ago that directly and immensely affected his identity. He immediately made a decision that changed his life forever. He decided to learn more about Deaf people, Deaf culture and American Sign Language. Through that experience, he realized how "Hearing" he was.

The change happened I would say about four years ago. When I went to Freeb University and while I was there for my first year, in December, during exam time where I was tired, and there was a lot of pressure around. What happened was I heard there was an interpreter hired for an Interpreter Task Force meeting. I went to the meeting and there were Deaf people there, and me, "a Hearing person". I considered myself as Hearing. They knew that I knew signed English and could use basic signs and gesture, but those people at the meeting were culturally Deaf.

As it happened, someone asked me a question and I spoke to answer. Well, they all teased me, picked on me and thought I was snob and so on, for speaking. That really got to me, but I held it in and after the meeting I went home. During the ride home, I started thinking about everything that happened and as I was driving home, I blew up and hit the wall. I was so angry and all that. After that incident, I made the decision then and there to learn ASL and fit in as a Deaf person.

I started to lessen my communication with hearing people (*pause*) it was awkward, it was too difficult, too many problems. It was just too awkward, plus I had no identity whatsoever at that time, not at all. And then as time went on, I started to fit in with Deaf people, to learn their language, a natural language, to go to different events, the bar, where I naturally learned to pick up things visually. I watched videotapes and learned from that and all of that happened about four years ago. That's what impacted me, when I realized, 'why I was being so Hearing', so to speak.

The change dramatically affected Arthur and his identity. Arthur felt that his confrontation with culturally Deaf people has led him to face and dealt his own fears and inadequacies. He, then and there, devoted himself to seek Deaf people and to understand Deaf culture.

Both Kelley and Emily confronted a change that directly influenced their perception of themselves also. For Kelley, her university and work experiences had a major impact on who she was. She got to know herself better and became more comfortable with her own identity. As mentioned earlier, Kelley said that she was not the same person now as she was in high school.

Emily, in retrospect, was a hearing individual who became deafened after the age of five. The change of her hearing status as it worsened tremendously altered her perception of herself. She no longer knew who she was. During her transformation, she was piqued to read about deaf people and deafness in general. After knowing for a fact that deaf people existed, she wanted to meet them and be with them. Emily got her wish which later proved to be even more confusing for her. Her understanding of deaf people was sketchy and it was not until she was an adult that she became more secure in knowing who she was.

> I got to know the deaf better...it was funny, my understanding of Deaf culture was skewed. I didn't understand "Deaf President Now" - that was a big thing - I was eighteen at that time, when they went through it. I felt sorry for the woman who ran for the presidency of Gallaudet University, I thought it was reverse discrimination. At that time, I didn't understand the cultural aspects, Now I do, but back then, no.
>
> Well, I think I realized that I was more myself, that understanding sunk in after I went to the deaf school. I started realizing...by the time I graduated, I graduated with honours. I pretty much knew who I was. I knew for example, I couldn't go to Gallaudet University, I couldn't handle it - an all Deaf environment, no way - I was mainstreamed. I knew that the college I went to would be different, there would be a large amount of deaf people like me, who had been mainstreamed and they tend to be oral.

The other participants did not go through the same dramatic change as Arthur and Emily did, nevertheless, there were changes that occurred in their lives that affected their perception of themselves. For instance, situations and experiences were the most common entity that influenced their psyche.

Quality of Social Experiences: Knowing Where I am Educationally But Not Socially

For all participating students, this area was the most sensitive description of their

experiences. I tried to treat this area as delicately as possible and allow the participants to voluntarily share their social experiences. As Kelley puts it, "Yes, I did have positive experiences and bad [social] experiences during high school, yes"; all the other participants acquiesced with her comment.

However, the negative social experiences were recalled and remembered more often than the pleasant ones. To describe the social experiences, Emily struck the chord that was felt heavily among the participants, "There was no problem, no confusion about where I was education-wise. Socially, a lot of confusion sometimes." Max, Sabrina, Lance, Emily, Christine, Arthur, and Kelley say their education experience was great and productive but in the realm of social experience, to them was different. For the most part, the social experiences left them a feeling of confusion and insecurity, and in few instances, helplessness.

Their interaction with high school peers often was minimal and curt. Many of the participants concluded that they did not belong, partly because of their deafness and partly because of the peers' unacceptance of their differences, especially, those who were the only deaf students in their high school. By and large, these deaf individuals often felt alone in their experiences.

Visibility.

In classes and extracurricular activities in high school, the peers and perhaps the whole school knew about the deaf students and had no trouble identifying and setting them apart. Lance, Emily, Sabrina, and Max were four individuals that experienced overt visibility. Lance wore a hearing aid in high school and his peers knew about it, "In revealing myself, I had a hearing aid on. They could see I had a hearing aid and they just knew, that's all." Furthermore, most of the time the participants did not know all of their peers and more often than not, they did not know the whole school. The plausible reason for the peers to recognize them is that they were wearing hearing aids, FM systems or any assistive listening devices that made them clearly and quickly identifiable.

Emily talked pessimistically about her high school social experiences, "Hearing school sucked. I had no friends. I had people who I knew, and who knew me, because I was very visible." She continued saying:

> Well when you walk into a classroom with the FM system that you are giving to the teacher sitting at the front, they get to know that you're deaf. So you're very visible for being deaf. So a lot of people knew me and I didn't get to know all of the names of my classmates. Sometimes I had to work with them for class projects and

stuff, but I wasn't really friends with them.

Max also described his bitter experiences about having the unwanted attention from peers toward his deafness. His peers appeared to have a hard time accepting Max's deafness. A factor that greatly influenced his difference was the existence of communication barriers.

> As being the only deaf student in high school, I felt I was noticed more because I was deaf, yes. Well sometimes there were communication barriers. There were two reasons, two fold - the negative side was the communication barriers and they looked at me like that they were feeling afraid of deafness. So I wish I could wear a t-shirt that said "beware of Deaf", to show them you really fear, that you're afraid to get close to me, especially those girls at that time. We'd talk, yes, but on the surface only, in-depth conversations were hard - with close friends, yes, but generally it was hard because, you also must know about my high school personality. If someone was different - they really had a hard time accepting without question people who were different, not just me and hearing groups, that's just the high school identity itself. I've noticed in other high schools it's much easier to deal with people. I've noticed that depending on which high school you go to.

Max continued the topic with a vested interest:

> I realize I am deaf or the situation that makes me feel deaf is by using interpreters, sign language, sitting across from me....Using a hearing aid..., then sign language, having people who didn't use sign language, or feeling rejected from them because they didn't understand, [and] there was communication barrier.

Sabrina also experienced visibleness toward her deafness in class. She did not feel comfortable in situations where she asked questions and answered teachers' questions. She ultimately knew that the students around her had to pay extra attention because she was deaf and they viewed her as a handicapped person. Her speech skills did not warrant her the security she desperately sought.

> Oh yes, I was the only deaf over <u>there</u>! You know, like a handicapped. Well, well, I stood out when I have to ask a question or want to participate in class discussion. The other students would have to pay attention because they know I'm deaf. It was difficult because, because of the way I speak - the way I speak is different. I would feel conscious of myself.

<u>Communication struggles.</u>

Max knew all along that it was arduous to communicate with his peers and taking the initiative in making himself understood was an onerous task at best. His peers mockingly made fun of his speech production and belittled him for his lack of ability in following group conversations. With fierce commitment, he did not let that stop him from acquiring his goals,

however, it produced a significant impact on him as an individual. He felt he was forever modifying himself to fit better with his peers and no matter what, in the end, he was rejected. It was extremely difficult for him to accept the rejection.

> The struggles I had happened when I would say I was beginning to feel detached, detached from my peers, I didn't fit. Part of [the struggles were] related to deafness [and] part of it related to personality wise too, theirs and mine as well. That part adds, adds more, added because of the struggle with communication misunderstandings. If the communication part was resolved there were be less of a problem. Communication, lip reading, it was hard to understand what they were saying, or they wouldn't be patient when I wasn't understanding or, - that embarrassed me sometimes or they would make a big show of my speech reading or my lack of understanding, not fitting, how to, [knowing] how to [fit with the group better], the social nuances, what behaviours they accept like trends/fads, it was hard to keep up with that, hard to, (*pause*) modify myself to them. You know, that was the hard part. I felt like I was rejected, that was hard.

Similarly, Lance had a difficult time in trying to understand his peers when his peers talked to him in class. However, Lance experienced a different dimension in regards to communication with his peers. At school he rarely communicated with his peers but when he did, it was usually in the oral mode and frequently nonverbal, "I communicated with my classmates orally - I would try to figure out what they were saying. Sometimes we would write, but that was rare. Most of the time we were active, where we didn't need to talk much, or we'd play cards, it was easy." However, Lance admitted that most of the classmates' conversation occurred in third person, frequently through Lance's brother Rohan which he did not like at all.

> The communication with peers in class happened in a round about way - it was never direct communication. Communication tended be through a third person....They would always communicate with me through a third person, something I didn't like at all.

On the other hand, Christine said that her peers at high school learned how to get used to her voice and therefore were able to understand her better than those who did not go to school with her. Despite her peers being used to her voice quality, they did not invite her to parties on weekends nor made her part of the 'in' group.

Christine is thankful now that she did not participate in many social activities outside of school even though she felt hurt and rejected at that time. Her ability to handle group conversations was not satisfactorily competent because she was lost in following conversations and her tolerance level for not understanding what was going on is extremely low.

> ...the problem [for my participation in social activities] was when they went to parties, high school parties, bars, I wouldn't be invited, they wouldn't involve me. Well, I felt [now], thank god I didn't go because of communication. I found it was very important because I was frustrated back then. I was frustrated easily, and would blow up, but now I'm more at ease and I understand what's going on.

Social rejection.

All participants in this study experienced some forms of social rejection and many remembered vividly the hurt and the pain they endured in their lives. During adolescent years, the vulnerability and fragility heightened when they were camouflaging their hurt feelings along with disappointments, misunderstandings and differences as people with hearing loss. Max recalled that his peers frequently, "look[ed] down on me like I'm nothing, or when I ask what's up, I'm told, "oh, it's nothing." I hate that. That's one thing I experienced a lot in high school." Also, Emily relayed a similar experience, "I had no socializing outside class...with the hearing people."

To them, these are now scars of the past, a bittersweet reminder of surviving a distressing social experience. Kelley surmised that the negative social experiences occurred because " the [other people] didn't understand [the idea of what deafness is and how it affects a person]." Sabrina supported Kelley's theory, "We are not born with brain defects - it's not that. Just these, it's just that our ears aren't working. That's all there is to it and a lot of people don't realize that...[and] they weren't prepared for it..."

Two participants expressed their strong reactions toward social rejection. Lance and Christine recalled the incidents that had a profound impact on their lives. Lance was a troubled child who needed more attention from his parents and teachers at school when he experienced a disruptive social change with his brother. He was no longer considered an important participant in the group and things thereafter fell apart for him. What pained him the most was that his school friends chose to visit his brother instead of him at home.

> Well, it started when I was young, in grade one. I was around other kids, and my brother would hang on to me. He stuck with me until grade six when things started to change. All of a sudden the friends were hanging around him and I was left out of the group. From grade seven to nine it was a really bad time for me. I was screaming for attention. For example, in grade six, I thought I'd play a trick on them and I pulled the fire alarm in school - the teachers all left the school, but no one let me know there was a fire alarm ringing - being deaf, I couldn't hear the alarm ringing. They all knew it was me that pulled the prank. The next year, in grade seven, I was involved with a bad group and we would be involved in stealing, shoplifting and then would run away. We were caught and when my parents found out they were so

upset...In grade eight, I had some attitude problems. I didn't want any support and I didn't care about having a tutor. I was a borderline student, my marks were at fifty percent and I just passed. In grade ten, I was really lucky, I went through a major attitude change, and then was getting seventy-five percent.

...[the negative impact on my social life occurred when my brother] ended up stealing my friends which really shocked me. You know, when my friends from school visit my home, I thought they were here to see me. Instead they were here for my brother. I was very disappointed.

Christine's tale unfolded as she spoke emotionally. She remembered going through a period of hatred toward school, friends and everything, and at the same time she was experiencing the engulfment of negative emotions toward herself which resulted from rejection. Fortunately, she had the necessary assistance from one of her teachers who helped her to overcome her silent suffering. She gradually found inner peace within herself through sports.

In grade seven, it was a tough year for me because I was fourteen, the others were twelve and were just becoming teenagers. Their transition and their behaviours, wow, it was becoming awkward because they were forming cliques.... My god, it was awful, there was a lot of insults thrown to the person till they apologized and found someone else to pick on. My group put each other down, everyone getting one up on the other. I felt hurt and so on.

It was happening too much and I remembered I felt so upset and wrote on the blackboard during lunch time, "I quit this hearing school. I hated Warsaw public school. I hated my friends, hated my teachers and everything." My teacher heard me writing on the blackboard and came in the room and saw me crying. That was Mr. McDoodle and he said, ok, calm down and he got Mr. Hay because that person was my foundation from grade five to seven and he counselled me, that was Mr. Hay. He was a nice man. He talked with me and explained things and helped me and stuff from grade five to seven. So he came and talked with me, asking why I was so upset. I explained that it was because of the cliques. He understood about the cliques.

Outsider.

Lance, Emily and Max were no strangers to the experience of being the "outsider". All equally felt that they were experienced outsiders watching hearing people interact in class and at social activities. Max expressed uncomfortableness at the notion of being an outsider, "What I didn't like was feeling different from others. I didn't belong with the rest of them. I felt like I was the outsider and that was not comfortable for me."

Lance had similar feelings about being an outsider. He felt frustrated and upset that he was not part of the group. He continued saying:

Well really the classmates' attitude toward me was like [as if I didn't exist]. I was like an outsider looking in. I was up against this glass window; I could see what

was going on, but I wasn't involved in the discussions. I was always looking around, trying to see what was happening.

I felt frustrated and really upset most of the time. The loneliest time was during lunch time. It was awful during lunch and very lonely, just watching everyone else, while I was sitting there doing nothing.

Emily has always been an outsider throughout her schooling experience, yet it was something that she got used to and denied any bitterness toward it.

E: ...So I was a little bit of an outsider.

I: How did you feel?

E: It was fine, I got used to it. I had always been an outsider during school years, during high school years, I was used to it.

Apparently Emily's feelings were numbed at that time. As indicated above, she did not explicitly state her feelings toward the experience of being an outsider. She added later that she had been neglected by her hearing peers in elementary school and she felt it had a detrimental effect on her personality. She developed social-emotional problems and later could not cope with it. Emily continued saying:

When I was in grade eight [and at that time, it was not a pleasant experience for me]. You have two kinds of 'abuse' in elementary school by the other children. One, that they pick on you like you wouldn't believe or two, they ignore you. I was ignored, I was totally ignored, nobody paid any attention to me. My teachers yes, the other kids, no. I had no friends. I never went out for lunch, I'd hide under the library table and read through lunch time, through recess time until they forced me to go out now - 'cause I wouldn't play with the other kids. But that's too hard on a child, emotionally speaking. And it got to the point when I was about thirteen, I just wanted to be with other deaf children - 'cause I knew I was different - I wanted to be around people the same as me.

These three individuals, indeed, experienced frustrations and uncomfortableness at being an outsider. The plausible occurrence for this may be because of their deafness and hence, they were treated differently. Max knew things could be better despite his harsh social experiences. He reasoned that in life there existed goodness and badness, so he silently sought for the goodness which he would make happen somehow.

<u>A silent cry to be accepted.</u>

Max struggled with his deafness and the situations revolving around his deafness. The

social and communication difficulties slowly taxed him to the edge. Meanwhile, it was fortunate that his guidance counsellor took notice and assisted him with his condition.

> And I remember in grade ten, my guidance counsellor noticed I was struggling with my deafness in high school too. She decided one thing that would maybe help me and help the students as well, she decided to set up a special day for assembly for about two hours. Grade nine and ten, I was in grade ten at that time, about four hundred kids were gathered together, and I was presenting with three other deaf adults who where also presenting on their deaf experience and sign language, and, Deaf community, Deaf culture. Exposing the kids to that, I told them "What's like to be deaf in a hearing world", but they needed to remember I am a person too, the same as they were, the point was' "yes I am deaf, but I am a person just like you- I'm not really different, I'm just a human like you". I just had special needs such as sign language, communication needs, I just needed understanding, that's all.

The other participants did not go as far as making their outcry publicly known. Most of them simply fell into the background, blending in with the shadows, as they quietly cruised through their high school life. Of course they wished for more participation, peer approval, and acceptance. And fortunately most have found ways to cope with it.

Social Acceptance

In spite of numerous contacts with social rejection in all forms, the participants have learned how to ease their way to acceptance among their peers at some levels.

Both Kelley and Arthur appeared to have a better association with their peers. They both had good cliques of friends in class and outside of school. Arthur was with his group ever since he started school. Arthur and his peers grew up together, and went to elementary and high school together which is considered a rarity today. Arthur reported having no problems in interacting with his peers.

> Now to the question of social skills, I socialized well with hearing people. This is so because my dad taught me how to socialize with hearing people. He helped me interact with hearing people so they could feel more comfortable with me.

Kelley, like Arthur, went to high school with peers whom she knew in her elementary years, however, her contacts with her high school friends were limited as she was involved with sport activities outside of school. Nonetheless, after some bad experiences in class, she would manipulate the situation in her favour so she could be in the right circle of friends where she would feel most comfortable.

> I was not really involved with high school activities. I wasn't really

extroverted. I was more involved with friends outside of school especially with sports outside of high school. I went sometimes to parties and I was on the running team in high school.

I had a bad experience [at one class] when I was stuck with them being partners for lab. I was stuck with them and they didn't understand how to work with me, that was bad. So I tried my best to manipulate - what's the sign for manipulate? Manipulate. Ok, manipulate the situation to get the right people, so that it was fun too. But basically it was a good experience. I felt free to mix with people in high school. I didn't feel awkward or that I couldn't participate.

With different interests and goals, she had no difficulty in meeting and making friends with people from all walks of life, "I fitted with different people, not just with one group. Lots of different ones. Yes, I felt comfortable about mixing with different people."

Max's social experiences somewhat improved as he developed self-confidence through the support of family, close friends and teachers.

The social part my first year was good and the kids were in the same situation as me. It wasn't easy, but I had a good friend that year and then a few good friends moved away. In grade ten, the situation at first was good, and then it became really tough, hard to fit with my peers. It was hard for about two years, in grade twelve, it started to improve and I started to develop my own confidence in myself. In grade thirteen, I joined many activities and I felt confident, so I would say that last year was my best year. It took a long time to develop that.

By improvement, I mean I have more self confidence, I mean developing, well, family support, which was there, friends out of school supporting me, a good guidance counsellor was there to support me. And for myself, something developed, I acquired more confidence in myself.

In grade thirteen, I joined the football team and interacted with friends and went out more often. Dances, parties - I didn't do that very much back then - so that I felt good about it.

More importantly, Max felt he belonged to the group which indicated their acceptance of who he was. "In high school I have found a group I fit in. I'd say the last two years, I felt I fit with the group better."

Christine became more involved with sport activities and became more popular among boys because of her strong athletic abilities. In that arena, she felt she was accepted even though she was not invited to social activities.

So I found other girl friends, and so on, but for sports, boys liked me because I was athletic - at baseball, soccer, basketball, I like that. Normally in gym class, they'd pick people for teams and I was the first girl picked - that meant I was accepted, that was positive for me, even though they didn't invite me to parties.

Furthermore, Christine later confessed that her sport activities had replaced her social

experiences. Likewise with Max, Christine felt her last year of high school improved socially when she participated in the student council. This gave her a voice which in turn gave her respect. With her new founded respect, she felt she belonged to the group more than ever before.

> Yes, being involved with sports replace the social experiences, yes. In grade ten to twelve, I was friends with kids in class. We'd talk and stuff, it was fine. We had a good time, and grade twelve was the best year of all because I became treasurer then of high school student council. I enjoyed that experience because I could sit and express my thoughts and had a voice for the sports team and so on and they listened to me. I felt I belonged to that group. They were fair to me, they'd agree or not agree but I was treated equal. And my oral interpreter was not with me, she was busy with other things.

Lance did not mention much about the positive social experiences with his hearing peers. But there were moments when he felt good about himself. Lance singled out one possible positive change for him social-wise; his high school accepted students from four different junior high schools that may have given him a chance to present himself confidently, a chance for him to be accepted, "Really, I think because high school was so different. In our community, we had four junior high schools which merged into one high school so I was able to make new friends. Socializing with them was nice."

Emily was not as fortuitous as the rest of the participants. She has not found solace in her social experiences among hearing peers at high school. At the same time she was learning to interact with deaf students in her dorm. And as a result of that, she became fast friends with Ashley Simeon, a deaf person who happened to be her roommate during her high school years. The next theme illustrates the participants' view of their deafness and how it affected their lives.

THEME THREE: Deafness As a Part of Self

A philosopher once said to a fish, "The purpose of life is to reason and become wise."
The fish answered, "The purpose of life is to swim and catch flies."
The philosopher muttered, "Poor fish." Back came a whisper, "Poor philosopher."
Max Black

This theme discusses the participants' involvement with the internal and external environment. Included is the impact the environment has on their deafness and the impact their deafness has on the environment and themselves. Several issues such as contact with the Deaf

and hearing community, discovering the Deaf world, and learning more about themselves are addressed in the following.

Minimal Contact with the Deaf Community

While growing up, the participants excluding Lance were ambiguously aware of Deaf community and may have had some contacts with Deaf people, however minimal. For example, as a kid, Max was cognizant about the Deaf community:

> Deaf culture, Deaf identity issues, I was not really that aware of that yet, but I knew there [were] Deaf community and Deaf culture, yes, as a kid growing up, yes.....but I didn't interact or relate with the Deaf world in [city] very much.

Despite their equivocal awareness of the Deaf community, there was no indication that they participated in the activities set forth by Deaf community or were culturally Deaf during high school years.

Unlike the others, Kelley considered herself fortunate for keeping the contacts with deaf friends. Kelley mused, "Well, I was lucky because I had contact with deaf friends outside of high school. And I was not very involved but it was enough - so I learned how to sign a little bit through meeting them."

Six of the people made no attempt in being directly involved with the Deaf community, outside of their school activities, although they moderately knew of its existence.

A Familiar Sight: A World of Hearing People

All participants grew up in hearing families and with one exception, Lance grew up in a deaf family with hearing siblings. They have been interacting with hearing people at school, at home or simply, everywhere. Two of the participants, Arthur and Lance, commented that they 'became" Hearing by following their peers during high school. The rest of the participants did not comment on this issue.

Arthur explained that he knew who he was, that he was "decidedly Hearing" by "interact[ing] with hearing people period [and]...fit[ting] with hearing people". His social interactions with hearing people enabled him to possess the identity of a Hearing person.

Lance, too, viewed himself as a Hearing person. For him, Hearing identity meant "you don't sign but you use your voice to speak. Take me, as a 'Hearing person', I would wear a hearing aid and I would speak clearly, which I was pretty good at, enough that I could fool

them [that I was not deaf]." However, he did not explicitly tell his peers that he had a Hearing identity.

> Hold on, you don't understand. I never told to people that I had a Hearing identity, it's what I thought to myself. I thought I was like a Hearing person during school and that I became a Hearing person during school, but no one ever asked me about that.

Not Wanting to be Different

Lance and Max dealt with their moments of despair of not wanting to be different from their peers and society. It appeared that they confronted a situation that reinforced the stigmatization of deaf and how deafness was unequal to being hearing in every respect.

Lance had reasons for incorporating a Hearing identity. To him, being a Hearing person allowed him, "...to be equal, I didn't want the hearing people to pity me because I was deaf. I didn't like the pity part at all and I would have none of that." He felt that the pity would change the concept of equality which he worked hard at creating. In his own words, he said:

> At the time I was involved - one time, related to identity - I was working in a hearing office. People would come in - I was responsible for parking tickets, passes, for the parking lots - one woman came in and said, "Hello, are you deaf? Can you sign?" I said I was hard of hearing, and gestured that I could sign 'a little bit'. Really I covered it up, because I wouldn't admit it. I wouldn't admit it because I didn't want everyone to look at me like I was different. I wanted to be exactly the same as them.

Because of his wariness toward society's negative attitude to deaf people, he affirmed the importance of being Hearing. "I think it was important because it gave me the same opportunity, whereas if I was deaf, they wouldn't give me the same opportunity to do it."

Max acknowledged that it was not easy being deaf. He did not like the feeling of being different from others when he was feeling insecure about his deafness.

> One thing (*pause*) I recognize myself as deaf, yes, - well, but it's not easy because I don't always feel good....I remember I was in grade nine, after a school practice I was on the archery team in grade nine. I had to wait for the late bus. The kids were gathered around in the hall and I was standing there and they were not talking to me. I felt alone, isolated. There were a few people there who I knew, but not close friends, and I could say (*pause*) I could see one person looking at me and one of my classmates was in front of me, and there was one guy who looked like he was talking about me to my classmate, saying stuff about me. I was able to lipread what was being said and what my classmate said was 'he's deaf" and then the guy understood, so that's why I'm different (*pause*) So, I'm alone but that aloneness makes it more difficult without a support group that (*pause*) at that specific time.

As Lance and Max uncovered their hidden desires of not wanting to be different, they added that it was because of their feelings of the past and that at the time of these interviews, the situation is different for them. They have fully accepted their deafness. It did not happen during their high school years but at university. The other participants may have had their moments of not wanting to be different from their peers, when the situations appeared bleak, but did not elaborate on the issue. The following issue examines two participants' discovery of the Deaf world for the first time.

A World to Discover

Emily and Arthur expressed the discovery of the Deaf world for the first time in a different way. It was Emily's dream to meet deaf people while Arthur befriended a Deaf person which in turn lead him to discover the Deaf world. On the other hand, Max, Kelley, Christine and Sabrina were exposed to a collective group of Deaf individuals while they were very young. They knew enough about the Deaf world which satisfied their curiosity to some extent.

Emily expressed, with a slight smile, her endeavour in meeting Deaf people. "...It was my dream at that time when I was twelve, [or] thirteen, to go to some kind of like [a] boarding school, a deaf school, away from home..." The opportunity came to Emily, at fourteen years old, when she entered a new world, a world of Deaf people in a residential school. Initially, she was astounded at seeing for the first time, so many Deaf people and their sign language all at once.

In contrast, Arthur discovered a new world, for him, a Deaf world with endless possibilities and choices. It happened when Arthur befriended a Deaf person from a Deaf family in grade eleven. He vaguely remembered that in the past he had a deaf friend at three or four years old but for some unknown reason the friendship ended quickly. Through his Deaf friend he soon discovered a new world, a Deaf world and it became the beginning of everything for him, a time of change.

> I found other choices through my Deaf friend. From him, I learned about the choices that I didn't know I had. He "opened the door to a new world that was out there". It was opened and it was a strange new world out there, I hadn't stepped through that door yet, I hadn't entered that new world out there. The other hearing world was so stifling, restricting - this new world was so much better... Mostly, [my] identity is out there [in the world of Deaf people].
>
> Well, when I found out I had a choice I was confused but (*pause*) it started

slowly, and it grew like a plant with direct sunlight, the plant grew slowly toward the light, so with a similar concept, I leaned toward Deaf culture. This did not happen at all at once, but gradually things changed.

So... it's strange, it was very confusing growing up, to know 'Deaf can do it'. I grew up with no choices. Now it was strange. It was like a door that was locked, and I couldn't get through. The door was locked, and the key was missing. I had the key for the hearing world, and could go through that door. I could see the Deaf world, but the door was always closed to me.

Yes, around grade eleven, the 'Deaf' door opened a little bit, so that I could peek through. After that, it opened all the way, especially when I was at University.

Being Deaf is Okay

As Emily participated more in the dorm activities, her resistance to learning sign language lessened and her social skills began to show promising improvements. She got to know Deaf people better and found signing easier than lipreading. Her understanding of Deaf culture was skewed, however, Emily gradually saw the advantages. Subsequently, she realized that being Deaf was nothing to be ashamed of. In her own words, she said:

> Not at first about being comfortable with my identity, but later because at first, like I said, I grew up in a hearing world and the whole attitude that being Deaf was a bad thing, that it's a shame. I remember when I saw other Deaf people, I thought there's nothing to be ashamed of, it's a person, the deafness is like having green eyes and brown hair, it's not a big thing.

Lance earnestly contemplated his identity after his encounter with his father on the issue of wearing hearing aids. He ceased wearing hearing aids and found nothing wrong with being Deaf. It was then and there that he began to accept a Deaf identity.

> It started with my father who came to St. Shavian. He showed me [in his unassuming ways] that I didn't need [the hearing aid] - he never came right out and asked me why I was wearing one, but it got me to thinking about Deaf identity and to look at the issue of deaf people wearing hearing aids. I felt it was funny, not 'normal' - was I hard of hearing or truly Deaf - it was very confusing. So I took it off - I realized, "what was wrong with being Deaf?"
>
> ... I started to think more about identity...Thinking about identity started to influence me when I looked at how [the Deaf people] were looking at me, watching what I was doing. They were very concerned about me. I finally went through what my identity was. I decided a Deaf identity was the best approach for me through my life.

Christine questioned the meaning behind the term "deaf" and after investigating, she decided it was the best description of herself in terms of her hearing loss. "[The school] told me to use [the word "hearing impaired" and] it wasn't me. I preferred deaf. What's wrong with

that, it's appropriate."

Max and Sabrina were compelled to think that their deafness created some kind of uncertainty among themselves and that they needed some time and experience to work through it to feel positive and confident. For example, Sabrina was very conscious about her deafness at school. "I would feel conscious of my deafness [when I'm around people at school]...because of the way I speak [and] the way I speak is different." Max said, "..I don't' always feel good [about my deafness]." In contrast, Kelley and Arthur (before his encounter with Deaf people) did not appear to be agitated over their deafness and simply, they chose to continue with their lives.

Taking Pride in Being Deaf

Only one participant addressed this issue, while the others were not as forthcoming as Max. Although the participants have not indicated their pride in being Deaf, this does not necessarily mean that they were embarrassed or ashamed of their deafness. However, Arthur mentioned at the very end of the interview that "to have pride in being Deaf, that doesn't occur in the isolated mainstreamed setting for me."

Max felt proud of himself as a Deaf person; it became a distinctive characteristic. He knew he was deaf no matter what the external circumstances were. Through his interactions with other people, he "...accepted that I was Deaf [meaning that]... I can't hear, that I use sign language as my primary communication." Using sign language and valuing visual communication fostered a pride in Max. He felt that being distinctive as a result of his deafness encouraged him to be proud of being Deaf.

> ...in some situations I was proud because...take sign language, some people were fascinated with it and wanted to learn. Although I didn't like teaching, I saw that they wanted to learn or copy from other people. I liked to see that, so that, and that showed support and I'd say...Myself, I was proud to be different; distinct. I didn't want to give it up.
>
> I think related to cultural identity, at that time I wasn't thinking of culture, I wasn't even aware of cultural issues. I know both socially, I use sign language and receive things visually, valuing my eyes and hands (*pause*) and visual use of communication, I understand that.

Furthermore, Max accentuated in a stately manner that there is nothing wrong in being Deaf. In fact, he abolished the idea of curing his deafness.

> I'm aware of the cochlear issues and others like "medicine" that "cures deafness." My philosophy on that is, forget it, I won't get it, I will keep my deafness,

> keep [it]...I didn't want to cure my deafness, I didn't want that. If someone gave medicine to cure it, I wouldn't want that. That was like there was something wrong with me and there was nothing wrong with me, nothing.

Identifying with Deaf People

Despite the different type of school placements and life experiences they encountered, all participants identified with other deaf people at large, although in different ways. Primarily, all have a hearing loss and that is the first identification they have with other deaf people. Subsequently, some identify through isolation among family, while others through communication and sign language.

Emily experienced isolation in her family due to not knowing what was happening with her family. Her family assumed that Emily was on top of things which did not occur at all. Communication among her family and extended family became ritually strenuous for Emily. She grimly could no longer fulfil the family's expectations in following family conversations.

> I didn't understand what was going on. No one sat down and explained it. That's a problem sometimes growing up in hearing families; they assume you know what's going on.
>
> Well, I identified with [deaf people] in many ways, like sometimes you can't hear some things. The lack of being able to participate in hearing families and I felt so isolated from my family - it's a big family, eight children and then you've got their spouses and children and I'm like, family reunions - I hate that because I can't participate.
>
> You know, to get in a group and chat about old times or who we are or about the children; what's happening now; who's pregnant. I find out someone's pregnant after the babies born, ok! That's how bad it is. But I understand that because deaf at the school felt the same way - they couldn't participate. It was like, we connected - I'm like that too.

Emily found relief when she discovered that deaf people in her school had a similar experience with their families. She felt less guilty knowing that she was not alone in her experience. Emily felt:

> Less alone, like it's not just [only] me and other people feel that way too and I didn't need to feel guilty. I always felt guilty because I hated being with my family in a large situation and you're supposed to love your family and I do love my family. I just don't always like them...I feel guilty [about that] and when you experience that and realize you're not alone which is ok.

When Christine's best friend came to visit her for one summer from United States,

Christine surprised herself by realizing that she missed her friends at the oral deaf school and the communication with deaf people.

> ...I missed my friends, I missed communicating with deaf people. I felt (*pause*) I can't use my hands to naturally express myself. With hearing people, it's all lipreading - you know what I mean! So it was a change. [Being with hearing people] was awkward [with] ups and downs.

For both Max and Arthur, sign language was the common tie with other deaf people. They communicated primarily through sign language at school and both had sign language interpreters. Lance, on the other hand, did not use sign language at school even though he did at home. Consequently, Lance identified more with his parents and older Deaf people in his community.

Kelley did not specify how she identified with deaf people, nonetheless, she stressed the importance of having deaf people around.

> Yes, it is important to have deaf people (*pause*)...I think it helps to be with people [who] have something in common...If there is no deaf people, it'll be hard, but...I don't know. I don't know, but I think it would be hard, yes because there will be nobody to relate to - to talk with, to relax with.

In grade twelve, Sabrina meditated deeply on the philosophical questions such as "Who am I" and "Does deaf make the person I am?" She had this urgent need to discover if other deaf people had similar experiences as she did. While attempting to seek answers to her excellent questions, she felt she was alone in her experience and needed someone to relate to on a personal level. Fortunately, she had found one friend who was able to give her the comfort and security in knowing that her experience was common among deaf people. After having the opportunity to meet deaf people at a club and at parties, she learned that she did have things in common with them. However, she was astonished to know that she also had different experiences than they did and that awakened her sense of perception of herself. In the following, Sabrina retold the incident as if it happened yesterday:

> That was when I realized I was deaf [since I was in eighth grade] - Yeah, inside, I knew that I wasn't any different from other people. My deafness did set me apart but I didn't feel any different because I had same things as them such as going through self-identity crisis, I'm sure everyone else went through the same thing but, on the other hand, I realized I was different because I'm deaf and, and, and I have to work twice as hard as other people and everything and it made me a kind of resentful because other people, I thought, other people had it so easy. And that's when, so I think (*pause*) in grade twelve, I felt a need to find out whether there are other deaf students who felt the same thing I went through. That's when I found out later about

[the club] and somebody heard about it and told me about it.

I thought when I first heard about the club, it was great. I missed being around the deaf people. It was something I missed but, because it had been a long time since I graduated from the deaf school, I was still going through identity crisis because who I am, who am I? I know that I'm a deaf person and I know who I am but I wonder if being deaf makes me the person I am. I wondered about it and I kept thinking a lot about it so, so in order to find out the answer I called up a girl who went to the same high school as me. Her name was Vivian Opi, she's also deaf. I never met her before but my school aide told me about her, because she knew her when Vivian went to the same school. She gave me her phone number. I didn't care about what she thought of me when out of the blue, I called her when she had never met me. But I didn't care, I just wanted to call her because she was a deaf student here and I knew she would have had the same experiences as I did. So I phoned her and we talked for a while on the TDD and we kept phoning after that.

We got together and we went to a deaf party and she introduced me to some other deaf people. It was nice to be - I felt weird, because I had been with these hearing people for so long that all of a sudden I'm with these deaf people [now]. I felt odd but, but yes, I did feel very comfortable talking to them which is the deaf world and yourself is deaf but the interesting thing, the more I got to know them, the more I realized that being deaf doesn't make you the person I am because I realized deafness is a small part of me because I found out that we do have similar experiences and yet we are very different people in other ways. Sometimes we would have personality conflicts, but I really did like them as a person and, but in time, on some things I found it difficult to talk with them because of the things we didn't have in common, so I really woke up from that experience.

Switching Between Two Worlds: Hearing and Deaf

Lance was the only participant who brought forward the issue of switching between the two worlds. The rest of the participants did not share Lance's unique family situation so they could not contribute to this issue.

Lance grew up in a deaf family and Deaf community. All his life, he saw that there were two worlds, one was of hearing people and the other was of Deaf people. Naturally, in each setting, he accommodated himself to fit the needs of that particular world. During school, he immersed himself with hearing values and at home, he incorporated Deaf values. He perceived himself as having a split half and half identity.

My identity is about half and half. During the day time, in school I had Hearing identity, yes [while the other half was Deaf identity]. Again, as I said about fitting in with school - with hearing people, I had Hearing identity and when I socialized with Deaf people, I had a Deaf identity.

But now, if I think about it and look back at it and think about identity during that time, I would say that from the time I got up and went to school until the time I came home, I was in the hearing world. I joined the hearing world and took on the identity of Deaf, oh no, I mean Hearing. I covered up my inability to hear. At night,

> I changed identities - really changed worlds - and took on the Deaf world. I swung back and forth.
>
> I went from Hearing to Deaf and back again, and didn't realize it until I met that Deaf man who taught me about Deaf culture and what it meant. Most of what he told me I didn't know, even my father didn't know. What he told me, I passed on to my dad, so that he could learn it as well.

Lance was not aware of the cultural values of both worlds until later as an adult. As a child growing up, it was a very natural response for him to respond to a particular environment by switching back and forth between the two worlds.

Next is the theme on the participants' coping skills in the mainstreaming environment at school.

THEME FOUR: Surviving in the Mainstream: The Participants' Coping Mechanisms

The most extraordinary thing about oyster is this.
Irritations get into his shell. He does not like them.
But when he cannot get rid of them,
he uses the irritation to do the loveliest thing an oyster ever has a chance to do.
If there are irritations in our lives today, there is only one prescription: make a pearl.
It may have to be a pearl of patience, but, anyhow, make a pearl.
And it takes faith and love to do it.
Harry Emerson Fosdick

All of the participants successfully graduated from their high school with outstanding grades. As indicated in this theme, Kelley, Max, Sabrina, Christine, Arthur, Emily, and Lance, all had developed coping skills both academically and socially to survive in the sphere of a mainstreamed educational setting. Most participants appeared to cope with their deafness in the mainstreamed setting and coped with the mainstreaming issues prevalent to them.

Arthur was the only participant who felt that he coped exceedingly well among his peers. He excelled in academics and he was in a good clique of friends who accepted him as a friend. He managed to cope very well in his environment and he attributed his successes to his family and friends who made things possible for him.

Max coped with his deafness by not thinking about it. Instead, he focused on himself more as an individual and the relationships he had with other people. He was learning to be an individual in his own right. In addition, he coped better when he was surrounded with people who were more accepting of his deafness.

> I don't focus on "deaf" itself much, I focus on myself and my relationship with

other people, what I mean is how I deal with people. We have an understanding, see eye to eye (*pause*) they let me know what's up. If not, I let them know and they tell me what's up, give me feedback - not make fun of my speech or look down on me like I'm nothing, or when I ask what's up, I'm told, "oh, it's nothing". I hate that. That's one thing I experience a lot in high school. And then I joined with more peers who didn't do that, who were willing to interact with me.

Well it depends on who I am interacting with, if they understand or accept deaf or experience being with deaf people themselves, no problem. I let them know that I am deaf and with that understanding, I felt I fit in. But personality wise, that depends, for the most of them, I fit in. If a person was new and unaware of deaf, sometimes it was awkward. Even though I readily admit I'm deaf, yes, but when their reaction is like "huh?" or "what, I don't understand what you mean" or using that label as a way to distance themselves, or to put me down, or - but some people are fine, so it depends on who they are, it depends on the group.

I think [my experiences supported me] more as a person than as a deaf person, but, well, during my high school years, I was developing as a person. I had a strong feeling of pride in my individual identity, so that developed. I, well, I felt different than most other deaf, because they all had the same collective identity, I didn't feel that, no. Because I had a bad experience at the deaf school, the kids there were good, but the education system was not and I felt no regrets, I didn't miss it, no. I didn't miss it at all, I was willing to suffer to get good education, there was less social opportunities than going through lousy education itself, I knew I would catch up socially in college and I did catch up.

Emily coped by not thinking about what other people thought about her. Nevertheless she was an insecure adolescent who wanted to belong to a particular group. Despite her exposure to deaf people in the dormitory, she discerned the fact that she could not cope in an all Deaf environment, that she had this strong need to be in a mainstreamed environment.

It was really not that important to me because I have always been an independent teenager. I was on my own, and I didn't care what other people thought. It's just once in a while, I'd think, ok, who do I belong to? Hearing, I don't belong to you, deaf I don't belong to you, so I belong to myself. I've said that but it's always important because it's hard to say but if you belong to something, you feel more secure. Sometimes as a teenager I didn't feel very secure as a person.

Well I think it finally sunk in after I went to the deaf school. I started realizing [when I was] about fifteen or sixteen years old, it was sinking in and I started growing and breaking out of my shell and by the time I graduated, I graduated with honours. I pretty much knew who I was. I knew, for example, I couldn't go to Gallaudet, I couldn't handle it - an all Deaf environment, no way - I was mainstreamed.

Later in her interview, she added that she hated to be labelled specifically on her hearing status. She could not handle it very well when both worlds demanded that she choose and support a side. She decried that individuality is more important than labels and should be treated as such.

> Well, my problem is I don't like labels. Sometimes they fit, and sometimes they don't. No I don't like labels. I think that if someone put a label on me, either they're mad at me because I didn't fit or I was mad at myself because I didn't fit and that I was trying to squeeze myself in this mould and it just doesn't work. Individuals, not labels, that's the important thing.

Sabrina faced a different challenge in coping with her deafness. She was aware of the limitations her deafness posed and that her classmates were beginning to decline their help since it became more than they could handle. So, she coped by pretending that everything is alright and put on a smile that fooled everyone. Her sister repeatedly told Sabrina that she had a problem and that she needed to solve her problem so that she could be what her sister wanted her to be. It appeared that her sister did not have the full understanding nor the appreciation of the complexities that deafness poses.

> As an example, I understand that it is difficult for [my classmates] to ease me into the group because I wasn't able to follow the group discussion therefore I wasn't able to contribute to the conversation or whatever. I will always have to ask first "What does he say?" or "What does she say?" [in order] to understand. At first they were interested in helping out but after awhile it gets burdensome which I can understand.
>
> My older sister told me, always tells me to, tells me that it's my problem - that I'm the one who just, who just should be more assertive. I shouldn't try to just stand out of the spot light, just try to participate with your friends but, it can't work that way. With deafness we are not able to always to know what other people were talking about. You know, you can't participate that way, so it was tough.
>
> [But] I think one of the reasons why I did well in academics is that I wanted to prove my self worth, my self worth that I'm not, I'm not less of a human being. Maybe that accounts for why I had such a strong identity because I wanted to prove myself. I think that has a lot to do with it.
>
> Well - No one likes to talk to a depressed person but I guess, the fact, no, I thought if - I think, if I act more cheerful, positive, optimistic, I would be more approachable with people. I would be - it would be easier for other people to talk to me. Well, I found it was successful, it did help a bit, but it was still a pretension for me. It was not the only thing, they couldn't see past my deafness, you know, it was like a window is standing between us. So I didn't like that.

Sabrina continued to say that she wanted to portray herself as a human being with potential. And in order for her to accomplish the image she tried to show, she had to demonstrate her self worth as an individual. She felt overly conscious about appearing obtuse to other people in the view that they would conclude her stupidity is based on her deafness. She tried to subsist by appearing intelligent far more than she needed to.

> I mean, I just tried to show people that I'm a person in more ways than in

academics, I show them that I'm capable of, of [my own capabilities] and I can do the most, [like with] writing, I showed them that I'm capable of [writing]- a lot of things....and when it comes to class discussion, I'd want to say something, I would always make sure my answer doesn't sound stupid, because I thought if I'd say something stupid, they'd say it's because she's deaf and there's something wrong with her brains. So I have to be more careful with them because just because I'm deaf and because I feel they don't know about deaf people. So I felt I had to make myself [look good] - I felt I had to make deaf people look good (*chuckling*), not just for myself, but for other deaf people out there to show them we have brains.

Yes, it's a big responsibility. Well, I hoped we are not just, we are aware of a lot of things more or less. I'm not saying deaf people- I mean- we have brains, we are just like normal people. The only difference between us and them is we have broken ear drums. That's the only tiny difference. But it's interesting that it makes such a big influence. How they feel about you, but really it's just a tiny thing.

Christine was utterly grateful to her parents for allowing her to enter a mainstreamed environment. Despite her discouraging feelings in regards to it, she felt a mainstreaming environment was important for her to function in the "real world". So, she managed to continue her schooling and replaced her social life with sports. However, she treated her classmates tempestuously with her critical and patronizing comments. She did not care about her classmates any longer because she had a hard time expressing her feelings to them. So Christine coped by continuing her schooling and her sports activities while not paying much attention to her classmates.

It was a big change but I feel grateful to my mom and dad for giving me the real world, because RIPD is a small world. Everyone knows each other, they are all deaf, Deaf culture - oral deaf culture - signing goes on in private and when I went to hearing school, I felt lost. I felt afraid too. I felt I was in a corner, a dark corner sometimes. I didn't feel -yes I had sports, baseball, golf, so on, I won trophies and stuff, but still I was in a dark corner.

I replaced my social life with sports yes,...I felt during high school I could have boyfriends but I tended to patronize people there, I'd look down at them at the hearing high school. I felt I had good marks. I was on the top, the second best student there at my high school. I'd look down at them and say, "you're stupid, what are you doing wasting your time". I criticized them, I became critical of other people. I would say something [in public], but others were private. I hate making waves. I don't like that . That's the reason in grade seven it influenced my decision about what I did. I didn't want to make waves. I didn't want problems. I prefer to have no problems in my system -[so I decided] to watch things - I did that a lot. I'd look about and judge silently of others, thinking, "you're in trouble, you shouldn't do that". I was a "good girl", they'd laugh at me but I had the last laugh. That was then but now it's different, because I feel with hearing people it's hard to express my feelings before. Now with deaf people, I don't believe in acting that way, mocking them, I don't do that, I try to help them. Over there, in high school, I didn't - I wouldn't try to help unless it was a

close hearing friend, I would try to help, (*pause*) but my classmates, I didn't care. But now, I care about my friends, I don't (*pause*) well, I care about my friends but it depends on the situation if it's fine - I leave it (*pause*) it's almost the opposite.

Christine remembered one incident when she was not accepted on a basketball team without consulting her because the coach felt that she was not capable of hearing the whistle. She became upset because she did not qualify on the team on the basis of her hearing loss.

> With basketball, I have no regrets [at joining the team] because the coach said, "you're deaf, you can't hear the background, the whistle" and that kind of thing. Oh, I was pissed off! Upset [when he made that comment]. I'd get easily upset and say, "Don't [you] tell me what to do. Go away. Get out of my face." [I was more upset] because they made a judgement and assumption before they even talked to me, met me, you know what I mean, know the real me. They made assumptions, they tend to make judgements against that person, why?

In school Lance managed to comprehend what he was expected to do with his homework. His teachers would write the assignments on the blackboard and if Lance was frustrated with reading and would not bother to ask his teachers to assist him. Moreover, his parents were unable to help him with his homework because of his parents' low education. As Lance matured into blossoming late adolescent, he ascertained what worked for him and shared his findings with his teachers who agreed to comply with his wishes. This in turn made things easier for him.

> Most of the time, it was really easy, my teacher would let me know what to read and what homework to do. She would write what I needed to do on the blackboard, for example, to read pages two to three hundred, and would write down what homework to do. That's it - then it was up to me to read the materials myself.
>
> I was a good student, the teacher would write the page on the board for me. Most of my frustration was with reading. I didn't understand what I was reading and couldn't ask the teacher so I had to figure it out myself. I looked it up myself until it made sense. Most of the time for math, I would develop my own measuring system. My own way of getting to the right answer. The teacher hated that. We would work on a question and I would put down the answer. The teacher would ask me how I arrived at the answer and I wouldn't know, I had no idea. I just figured it out, it was strange how I did that. It's strange, most of the time if I was frustrated, I would go home and ask my parents to help me. My parents would look at it and say sorry they couldn't help me, that was frustrating. You have to understand that my parents are deaf and went to a school for the deaf. At that time, Xavier had no formal grading system, you were just passed from one level to the next, which was a repetition of the previous level. You did the same thing until you graduated at age of seventeen.
>
> But anyway, the following year, in grade ten - I didn't have to - but I decided to take summer school. In looking through the information, and looking back, I preferred small classes because more information could be shared. I focused better

academic-wise. The teacher spent more time on me, whereas with a big class, they barely knew my name. I was learning and found I could ask the teacher for help. Then in grade eleven, that was my best year, things improved and my marks went to a seventy to eighty percent average.

How it improved? - well I asked my teacher, "do you mind", - well really, when school first started I explained a few things to the teacher. Rather than looking at the board while s/he was talking and writing, I asked the teacher to look at me to help me with lipreading . Lipreading is difficult and most of the time I caught maybe twenty-five percent of what was being said. I was prereading the materials, which was really important, along with notetakers, whose notes I could photocopy because I had access to the school's copier and I could also ask the teacher for help and that's about it . Although I didn't do that very much, I guess I was lazy.

Lance acknowledged that his parents knew what was best for him education-wise and they hoped that he would be better prepared to deal with hearing people once he entered the workforce.

It seems my parents knew what to do with me. They made the decision that I would go to a hearing school, that I must, absolutely must, go to a hearing school. When I ask them why, they say it's to prepare me to work in a hearing world because I certainly should not expect to get a job in the Deaf world. I need to know how to deal with hearing people. Anyway, I practiced my oral skills and my aunt and uncle taught me to speak one day a week for almost two years. At that time, I wasn't very proficient with my oral skills, and since then my skills have gone up and down. So I had oral training while I was growing up and I felt frustrated. Then when I graduated, I finally felt better.

Kelley, on the other hand, felt fortunate that her classmates were understanding enough to include her in class activities which gave her a sense of being an equal partner. She had a friend who was more than willing to help her out in all situations. She did not have to use much of her coping skills in school as she thought she would have.

I feel the same about the coping skills among deaf people, yes. [But] I was very lucky because my friends were wonderful. They helped me in the classes. Like for example, for English class and group discussion - I was excited about that (*sarcastic*). But one of my friends - I said nothing - but he came and sat next to me and wrote what the discussion was about. It was what I needed. He was wonderful. It was good that he wrote that down. He'd say, "if you have a question, write it down and I'll say it for you." That was nice of him, I didn't ask him to do that. I felt, I liked that, I was very lucky. I was able to participate fully and not feel isolated.

All appeared to have successfully adjusted within their environment to the best of their ability. The strength of their coping system rested on their ability to function in the society they lived in. The next theme discusses the participants' role models during their high school

years and the significance their role models played for them.

THEME FIVE: Having Someone To Look Up To: The Participants' Role Models

Roles
Women know who they are
Men know what to do
We need to learn to act
They need to learn to be
Natasha Josefowitz

All participants except Lance had role models while growing up. Most of them selected role models that personally appealed to them. Max, Emily, Kelley, Christine and Sabrina valued their parents greatly as a role model. Arthur, in retrospect, selected a politician for his role model.

Participants' Role Models

Some of Max's role models were people he knew personally. His other role models came from books he read while he was a youngster. Currently, they still serve as role models to him.

> (*chuckling*) Well, my parents, some sports figures (*pause*) some famous historical personalities or philosophers and my history teacher, Mr. Moroz, he was a neat man. Well I picked those who have a strong spirit, who are a good people, work hard and who go through life struggles, who find humour, mystery and wit in the midst of all that.

Christine looked up to her mother and her best friend's mother in another country. "My mother mostly. My best friend's mom in America. I went there to visit them during the summer time (*pause*) my aunt, my cousin in Toofarville, just a few of them." She felt that they served as excellent examples for her to learn more about herself.

Her reasons for selecting her role models focused on how they handle life situations in a sensible way and how they lived their lives satisfactorily. She answered:

> Well, they have common sense. How they spend money, how they have a good home, a house, whatever. I see they survived well, I think they're good people - friendly. My mom's a nurse, she has good friends, has a nice job and so on and not because she's paid well but she talks with people, like my cousin, my aunt and uncle, my father. I admit he was my role model in some ways, but not fully (*pause*) so I learned an important lesson with my parents. He blew up a lot, got angry [at] any place. My friends maybe though they don't know but that was him in the past. I realize

I could easily blow up too. I remember I blew up with my friends- they didn't want to play with me - the same as my dad.

So I learned I can be stubborn and blow up, but I have to be positive. If I feel hurt by others who hurt me I have to tell them not to hurt me and tell them what's wrong and say what it is. So my mom, with everything going on, she didn't know. My dad would tell me if I was wrong, he'd say I wasn't thinking about myself and I'd say ok to my dad and would start thinking about myself. To control my behaviour, control my temper, [and learn to reduce at] being stubborn. I prefer to be stubborn in a positive way, not negative and demanding stuff and so on. If I'm stubborn there needs to be a reason. Anyway, that's each individual I had as a role model, they were all different people but I learned from their behaviour. My father, my mother and so on. It helped me to be really me.

Emily's role models were from her deaf school who accepted her for who she was. Her counsellor, in a sense, was her caretaker in a special way. She developed a strong respect for herself through her counsellor. Her other role model was her friend who made sure she did not miss out the social opportunities crucial for adolescents. Emily responded:

Role model (*pause*) it was my favourite counsellor, Kat, and she was excellent because she never forced me into anything - Deaf culture, Hearing culture. She let me be myself and I think she had a lot of patience with me. When I was a teenager, I was pretty egocentric. I focused on myself - I think that's pretty normal for teens. And she'd take me out with her, she'd take me for supper or when I was supposed to be in bed, I'd sneak out and sit and chat with her in the office. We'd chat, she would help me with my homework.

That was one, the other role model was my deaf friend Ashley Simeon. She taught me how to socialize basically. She'd get me out of my room when I wanted to stay in my room and read, just by myself, she'd drag me out, make me play pool. Drag me out and say, "let's go swimming", drag me out, you know. So we did that.

During the interview, Sabrina picked her mother as her role model and moments later added her father. They both taught her how important she is as a person. She felt her parents treated her and her sister equally and she did not get any special treatment for her condition. However, she found it odd that her sister and her cousin viewed it differently, that she did get the special treatment. Sabrina shared:

Okay, my school aide who is my role model...But my mom was my role model because she's a very determined woman, very stubborn woman and she believes that (*pause*) for example, no matter how difficult that can be..she has her own voice and applies to oneself and both of my parents, they taught me that I had a lot of worth, they didn't treat me as deaf people - they never gave me a special treatment or anything. They never gave me a lot of things I wanted.

It's funny that my older sister and my cousin who's the same age as I am, they were jealous of me because they thought I got the special treatment from [my parents]. I was very surprised when they told me that. Because they never [really understood

fully about being deaf] I would be glad to trade places with [my sister] because [my life] has been difficult.

Kelley's role models affected her in different ways and situations. All had influenced the path she took in her life both educationally and personally. Kelley said:

> Many different people were my role models during high school. Many different role models in different situations. One really good English teacher was wonderful. He taught me how to write at that time and I feel I can write really good. He started that, encouraged me to write well. And others, like the running team encouraged me to be patient especially with pain and to continue on. The coach was really, really good in encouraging me. I had many different role models.

In contrast, Arthur has had only one role model whose example he still follows today. Arthur picked him because of his political involvement at school. "It's the same, it's still the same, Winston Churchill. Because he was involved with politics. I picked him because he led the British through the war - that's the reason."

Lance was the only person who claimed not to have any role models while he was in high school. "None whatsoever...The problem was while I was growing up, there were no role models for me. No one to tell me right from wrong and my brother was no help at all..."

While all except Lance idolized their role models, their models had a major impact on their lives. Emily signified the importance of her role models because she said that "both [of my role models] had a great impact on me." In a similar vein, Kelley reinforced the significance the role models had upon her life, "They didn't change my life, but they influenced me and the path I took. They taught me, I'd say, values and skills to continue through life."

The Quiet Heros: The Participants as Role Models

Three participants solemnly reflected on the question, "Do you consider yourself as a role model?" before responding. The other participants were not asked this question as it naturally developed during last three interviews although it would have been interesting to see what their answer would be.

Lance, Sabrina, and Kelley hesitatingly agreed that they considered themselves a role model to younger people. Sabrina wanted to set an example of herself to the world, Kelley to certain people, while Lance focused on mainstreamed deaf youths.

In the following, Sabrina reflected on the issue of herself as a role model:

> Hmm, do I consider myself as a role model? Maybe, maybe, like I want to show other people that I'm, I'm capable of doing well as anyone else. Yes, I want to show people that I can excel at anything. I want to prove myself to the entire world- not only deaf people, not only hearing people but just everybody because I want to show them that I'm human being. And, and I think about these deaf people because I felt I had a responsibility to prove to other people, to other hearing people that we are not stupid people.
>
> I knew since I was in eighth grade, because when I was in the eighth grade, I knew I was different from other people and I wanted to overcome that "difference" and so I felt at that point that I had a responsibility - yeah.

Lance emphasized the importance of having a role model in order to identify with someone you respect. Fortunately, he considers himself as a role model to younger deaf students from mainstreamed environments where he can teach and instill them with Deaf culture and values.

> ...It's important to have a role model. While I was growing up, I had no role model. I didn't know who I was, I had no identity. Do you understand what I mean? I could now become a role model for the younger people. That's why about four years ago I was involved in the founding of [an association for deaf youth]. I took kids who were in an isolated mainstreamed class and brought them together to teach them about Deaf culture. Growing up they had no exposure to it and didn't know what Deaf culture was all about, they only knew about learning to talk.

Kelley, in retrospect, said, "Considering myself as a role model depends on whom. I suppose so that I am considered as a role model, yes, people have said that to me. Being a role model feels good. It's something [I can] give back to them."

As seen in this issue, the participants had role models in their lives who they looked up to and still view them dearly today. Some of them view themselves as role models for the younger generation in the hopes that they will lead successful lives.

The next section describes the present status of the participants now that they are in or graduating from university. This is not a theme or an issue, but a place where they are today. They share their current status and thoughts about themselves.

Reintroducing The Participants: Where They Are Today

Of the seven participants, six are currently at university pursuing a degree. One participant graduated last year. All sought other deaf and hard of hearing individuals when they entered university and developed strong fast friendships with them. Sabrina, Kelley, and

Christine learned sign language and now are able to communicate with sign language users. Christine visited the university to find information about the university and its services. Christine remembers vividly how surprised she felt when she asked an interpreter who later said yes to her question, "Could I learn sign language through the interpreters there, the community, [and] deaf people?"

Max, Emily, and Arthur continued signing, but more closely to American Sign Language (ASL) than before. Lance continues to use ASL. Subsequently, all of the participants use sign language interpreters and see the benefits of using sign language in their academic environment at university.

They kept in contact with their hearing friends, and interestingly, all have made new friends who know sign language or have some signing skills. Christine acknowledges,"I have more friends at the university, [some] are deaf, some are hearing like the interpreters, the staff on BBCC, [and] a few of my classmates."

Currently, they are rediscovering the Deaf community and some have participated in activities with other Deaf people. Emily feels strongly that "you should have contacts outside university - perhaps with Deaf culture or community or if it's with friends in general or whatever." Particulary Arthur and Lance have immersed themselves in the Deaf community and hope to be the leaders of tomorrow. Lance remarks, "Now, it's expected that I will become a leader in the Deaf world."

Max, Sabrina, Kelley, Lance, Arthur, Emily and Christine now accept the advantages of both the Hearing and Deaf worlds and take what each offers. Arthur explains:

> I could go back and forth, but I choose to be Deaf. However, in an emergency or whatever, if I have to, I can become more Hearing. I can do that. I've noticed sometimes with a group of Deaf people where we're all signing and the waiter will come up to us, in a restaurant for example, there will be a group of us Deaf at a table and the waiter will come and talk to us. To answer, I write to the waiter. I respect the language of those I'm with - I write or gesture. But, if I'm with hearing people I will speak, but, sometimes now I'm starting, with hearing people, to teach them to sign or gesture and to explain things by gesturing. I prefer that. ASL is more comfortable than speaking English.

Also, they accept the task of educating the people who attend university on the general implications of deafness. Emily illustrates:

> I think you have to make people more aware about deafness. People say, "oh, you're deaf, oh sure, fine", but they don't understand the implications [fully]. For example, health services - these people are doctors and nurses, ok - I had this great big

> mark on my file saying this person is deaf. So fine, I'm sitting there waiting to be called, for someone to come up and get me. I'm thinking I'm deaf, they should know this, I'm deaf and I'm sitting there and they are calling my name behind me, "Emily Hiquist, Emily Hiquist?", and I'm sitting there oblivious to it all (*whistling*). People don't stop and think of the implications of this kind of thing, it's crazy.

All acknowledged that they felt more complete and comfortable with themselves, however, they cautioned that they are still evolving identity-wise as they continue to meet and seek out academic and social experiences. And still they continue to question the meaning of "who I am". To them, they accept the fact that identity is not a statue with a fixed personality and mind. Emily confidently says, "I have no problem with people recognizing that I'm deaf. I don't make an issue out of it...Most of the people tend to be pretty good about it - at first they're a little uncomfortable if they are hearing but if you're comfortable with yourself they settle down."

Lance, on the other hand, feels differently:

> I suspect because it's easier to have a Deaf identity than a Hearing identity. Now I've begun to realize that when I speak, I am misunderstood. For example at McDonald's, I would say my order, and when I receive it, it ends up not being what I ordered and I have to eat what they gave me. Now with my Deaf identity, I write down my order and hand it to them and I know that I will get the right order. Now I am content and it's much easier having a Deaf identity than a hearing identity.

Interestingly, as they broaden their contacts to include a variety of people, they appear to connect better with their university deaf and hard of hearing peers. They participate more on the social level with deaf and hard of hearing people than they do with hearing people. Their reasons may include the convenience of sign language and the shared experiences among Deaf people. Arthur explains:

> Well really I live in my [Deaf] world...[So at the university] I'm just there to do my work, I'm there only for the training and then I go home. I don't stay there and talk with [hearing] people and get very involved with things or participate in things. I'm there to do my work, I do it, then I go home. I don't know if you call that socializing with them. I interact with them, but I don't socialize with them. I interact with them daily, but socializing is a different issue.

The following chapter focuses on the implications of this research. The recommendations have been drawn directly from the participants or from my analysis of their experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: THE PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

Just imagine how boring life would be if we were all the same.
My idea of a perfect world is one in which we really appreciate each other's differences.
A world in which of us are equal but definitely not the same.
Barbra Streisand

Discussion and Observation

The question "What are the perspectives of identity for deaf individuals who grew up in mainstreamed classes?" was investigated in this qualitative study in order to obtain a better insight into the worlds of deaf teenagers. With this increased understanding, educators, professionals, and parents alike might be better able to assist deaf individuals in constructing and structuring their identity. For those who are mainstreamed at the secondary or post secondary level, the information shared here might reassure them that they are not alone in their experience.

It is important to acknowledge the participants who were interviewed for this study. They are indeed a special group: intellectually erudite people pursuing higher education. They are part of a tiny elite group of deaf people and may be the leaders of tomorrow. They possess excellent articulation skills on the topic investigated. The participants described a variety of experiences that affected their lives identity-wise including their perceptions of themselves within their mainstreamed high school environment.

This study helps us to appreciate the uniqueness of the individual. As these individuals shared their perspectives, they chose to elaborate issues meaningful to them that had a major impact on the sense of who they were. While each story is truly unique, there remains a feeling of unifying shared experiences among the group.

In the themes that emerged, some issues may also have been seen in the research literature; most of the issues described were similar to my own personal experiences. The participants, however, have provided new and intriguing perspectives. Themes and issues are examined in the light of previously conducted studies, and the new perspectives will be addressed in this chapter.

It is highly probable that some experiences related by the participants are not unique to these students; other deaf students may see themselves on these pages. Additionally, the recommendations for public, professionals, parents, and mainstreamed deaf students, and future

research are included.

Participants' Mainstreaming Experience in High School

To understand the participants' identity experiences, we need to recognize the importance of the external factors that influenced their understanding of themselves identity-wise within the mainstreamed context. The following contextual conditions appeared to be important to the participants: their overall mainstreaming experience, the use of support services, and the absence/presence of other deaf students in school. These outside factors appeared to influence participants in structuring their identity and each will be discussed in-depth in the following.

Overall Mainstreaming Experience

All the participants in this study have been mainstreamed for more than four years; five participants were totally mainstreamed throughout their school lives while the other two entered junior high school from a residential school. All were mainstreamed in all classes and none were in self-contained classes. As predicted in the research literature, their academic mainstreaming experience appears to be much more successful than their social mainstreaming experience. This is very much similar to my situation; I was more successful with academics than I am with social activities with hearing people. Yet, they all have developed similar coping strategies to succeed in the educational environment. Interestingly, more than half of the participants were the only deaf students in their school while the remaining interacted occasionally with other deaf students in their high school.

The quality of overall mainstreaming experience in high school differs slightly among the participants. For instance, Arthur and Kelley reported more of a positive experience while Lance, Christine, Emily and others had shared more of a dissenting outlook on mainstreaming. However, the conditions for successful mainstreaming revealed that the participants had the support services and that they were motivated to challenge themselves to succeed. Researchers such as Lee and Antia (1992) indicated that the factors that may lead to successful integration for some deaf students rest on the qualities inherent to the student such as personality, motivation, and communication ability. Albeit, this is half of the equation, to achieve a successful integration formula, there needs to be more. The other half includes the external

factors of the program such as the support services (Lee & Antia, 1992).

Some participants received full services throughout schooling while others had only minimal support and others had none. I had marginal support; I only used an FM system for four years. The success depends on the conditions available and what determines success varied among the participants. For those who did not use the support services or had marginal support, the meaning of a full integration is challenged.

It is of interest to note that the adjustment to the hearing environment in high school appears not to differ greatly between those who were mainstreamed all their lives and those who had been students at the residential school. For example, Christine and Sabrina, previous students at the school of the deaf, had a difficult time in adjusting with educational integration, especially at the beginning. So did Max, Lance, and Emily when they entered high school for the first time although to a lesser degree. I experienced similar frustrations in dealing with the high school environment. This may indicate that, regardless of the previous experiences they had, mainstreaming or residential, a deaf individual still needs to adapt. The high school environment appears to call for further coping strategies and in some cases, the development of new coping skills despite the existence of a full integration formula.

In regards to school work, compared to their hearing peers, evidently, most of the participants worked two or three times as hard to learn despite the kinds of services they received. Ironically, they also appeared to find a great gratification in excelling in academics. This was true for me when I learned I had mastered difficult concepts far more readily than some hearing peers, I felt very sophisticated, important and proud. However, when I did not grasp the material while others appeared to succeed with it, my frustrations grew dramatically. This may reinforce the idea that to succeed in the hearing environment, you need to do far more than the average hearing person needs to do in order to be seen as equal or better than the hearing peer.

Most participants except Kelley and Arthur tried to interact with hearing peers in their class and outside of class. Unfortunately, the interaction was often limited and short. To date, a startling number of studies of deaf students in the mainstreamed secondary and post secondary settings have reported limited interaction among hearing peers. Additionally, the interaction between hearing and deaf peers is somewhat less than meaningful (Foster, 1988; Foster 1989; Foster & Brown, 1988; Mertens, 1989).

On the other hand, Kelley and Arthur reported that they interacted daily with their

peers. They appeared to enjoy the company of other hearing peers. A possible factor that could be attributed to the social integration is familiarity. Lederberg, Ryan, and Robbins' (1986) study on preschool deaf and hearing children showed that the higher degree of familiarity increases the formation of acquaintanceships between hearing and deaf students (cited in Lee & Antia, 1992). Both Kelley and Arthur went to high school with peers whom they knew from elementary school while the others were newcomers in high school.

Support Services

As indicated in the research literature, support services in mainstreamed schools were created to meet the needs of mainstreamed deaf students in classes. Most participants used a variety of support services in class: interpreting services, FM systems, tutorial sessions, and notetakers. Of those, all participants combined several support services where the interpreter and the FM system were the popular combination. More interesting is that the services provided differed in quality and nature. For instance, Sabrina had students to interpret class information in basic sign language for her and Arthur had an interpreter who was his mother and then later, a professional interpreter interpreted for him. Apparently, the services received were not always professional which may have resulted in the students receiving less than full equal access to education.

The students appeared not to be aware of the full integration formula. They accepted things as they were and accommodated themselves as best they could. I remembered that when I was using an FM system, I thought that was the only thing required to make educational opportunities accessible. Little did I know that I could ask for notetakers and tutorial sessions. I believe that this issue gets alarmingly overlooked nowadays; students need to be aware of the fact that they could ask for additional services.

Of equal importance, using support services does not correct the situation. For instance, wearing an FM system does not remedy the communication situation in class. Teachers and students, including deaf students, need to be aware of the facts and be educated in the strengths and weaknesses of the usage of such services.

On the other hand, Kelley and Lance did not rely on any support services. They felt they could strive independently without the use of such services. Saur, Layne Hurley and Opton (1986) indicated in their study that mainstreamed post secondary deaf students had to accept their deafness in order to receive appropriate support services. In reference to Lance and

Kelley's rejection of support service, one possible explanation is that while the intent of support services is to make education accessible for deaf students, it may also create a negative overtone in terms of the dependency it creates when deaf students use support services. Also, the rejection of the services may imply two things: the deaf students are avoiding the dependency the services create for them to show that they are capable of accomplishing the school tasks independently or that they are hiding their deafness, passing as hearing, and not accepting the limitations their deafness poses. As this is not yet determined, to date, research has not answered the question concerning the possible influences the support services may have on mainstreamed deaf students identity-wise.

Absence/Presence of Other Deaf Students

The participants I interviewed were the only deaf students in their all hearing school excluding Kelley and Emily. Both were the only ones who had social experiences with other deaf students within their school in which they consciously knew that it had its advantages. Both Foster (1988) and Leigh and Stinson (1991) indicated in their studies that the presence of deaf students in the school promotes personal and social development of other deaf students within the same school. It is one factor that may contribute to the reduction of overall social difficulties the deaf students may have at school.

Logically, the presence of other deaf students may compensate for the social difficulties one has with hearing peers but unfortunately, it can also be posed as a threat. It has been my experience that I was not thrilled in identifying with the deaf students in my high school. I was ashamed of them and even more ashamed of myself for being ashamed. This was so because the deaf students were categorized as having lower intelligence. The school I went to accepted deaf students and placed them in various programs according to their intelligence and skills. Conversely, the hearing peers loathed these low educated deaf students and demeaned them in every possible way. Even though I was mainstreamed in classes where these same peers knew of me, I felt they still lumped me in the same category as the other deaf students. As a result, I hated to be identified with them and subsequently, hated my deafness. It was then that I started to investigate my chances of becoming a hearing person. The main conclusion derived from this is that the lower status quo the deaf person has in the view of hearing peers', the more likely the other deaf would not want to associate with that person because of the perceived effect it will have upon the brighter student. Furthermore, s/he

will end up having similar or worse experiences than those who were the only deaf student in an all hearing school.

The absence of other deaf students in the school may lead the deaf students to either seek out similar significant others out there or closely identify with hearing peers in school. Sabrina had the strong need to seek other deaf people while both Lance and Arthur identified closely with hearing peers at school.

The Participants' Understanding of Process and Development of Identity

The participants' understanding of the process they went through in terms of identity development in high school was reflected more when they are adults. The development of identity is ongoing and with these participants continues to take place in a university environment. If students are in post secondary programs, they are offered a variety of courses and psychology courses may be part of the program. Likewise, assessing and understanding identity occurs with the maturity and open-mindedness of the individual. Gaining experience increases the volume of understanding in regards to identity which in turn encourages people to embed their definition in their life experiences.

In my experience, deaf people who have taken psychology courses tend to discuss the topic relevant to identity with other deaf and hard of hearing individuals with similar educational background. Through this interaction, they seek to confirm their affirmations, and learn or modify their understanding of the relevant topic. In this case, the participants shared their insights on their identity with me and at the same time, they were partly seeking my reaction to their responses. During the interviews, I noticed that some of the participants were still learning more about themselves when they were conferring with me. This is not unusual in qualitative research (Bodgan & Bilken, 1992).

The participants' understanding of the topic reveals how they view themselves according to the definitions they contributed. Lutes (1990) supports the idea that in order to understand identity among deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the starting place is to ask them the basic question: who are they?

> In a sense, how a person defines him/herself is the most fundamental question that can be asked of an individual. I think that looking at identity allows a chance to look at the core of the person. In terms of understanding the impact of hearing loss on people, identity is the place to start. (p. 19)

More importantly, we need to be reminded that "...identity does not come automatically to you or I, and most assuredly, not to adolescents; it is worked for and struggled with, and it undergoes advances, regressions and plateaus" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 119). This is very true for deaf adolescents. Furthermore, identity and development are two separate issues, that when combined, influence a person. According to Rangell (1994), identity is "...how a thing, in this case a person, is known; development, how its course, the events and sequence of its life cycle, determine and affect that identity" (p. 25).

In this study, the participants' focus was on identity, how they were known. The developmental part was not addressed fully in the interviews, however, it emerged partially in the analysis of the data. This aspect merits further research.

At the time of the interview, all participants were able to describe their perspectives of themselves in the past however, when looking back at the years of high school, they acknowledged that they were not directly thinking about identity per se while growing up. Instead, all were concerned about learning who they were, learning to be themselves, and to connect with other students in school. Evidently, they felt that they went through adolescence in ways similar to those of hearing adolescents; they were all seriously engaged in preparing themselves to be adolescents, finding where they fit within the larger society. Likewise, I was struggling to learn who I was and to figure out where I fit with society and vice versa.

The process of identity development is similar between hearing and deaf individuals. Garbe and Rodda (1988) argue the fact that deaf individuals are no exception to the process where individuals construct, structure, and accept their identity. To continue further, they argue that "...the differences between the two groups [hearing and deaf] lie in the mode of communication and the community in which these feelings are allowed to be developed" (p. 67).

However, I beg to differ. While I fully support the notion of both deaf and hearing adolescents going through an identity process, I strongly question Garbe and Rodda's claim that the communication issue and community belonging are the only difference between hearing and deaf people. Deafness is part of the individual's life which alters the world he or she lives in. For example, if I ask a hearing individual to imagine being deaf or ask a deaf individual to imagine being hearing, their responses will likely be overwhelmingly qualitatively different in nature and in perception. Assuredly, it will tremendously alter the perception of themselves, not only with the communication issue and the community part but the whole

essence of being. I am an individual where my world is entirely different from those of hearing people because deafness pervades and affects my entire being. That is the major important difference.

But, ironically, during the years of adolescence, I would agree with Garbe and Rodda's (1988) that we are people with hearing problems and that we have special communication needs. During high school years, I did not want to be different from my hearing classmates and I would probably defend the idea that we are similar to hearing people with one exception, that we have special communication needs. Likewise with the participants, their high school experiences appear to uphold the focus on the communication differences. However, some of the participants now appear to question this and some do continue in believing that they are indeed individuals with special communication needs.

Participants Identifying Themselves: Experiences and Identity

The participants have sought answers to their identity of who they are. Their seeking answers appeared to have been influenced by the experiences they had within the mainstreamed context. The data in this study appear to support the idea that personal and social mainstreaming experiences, especially with hearing students, have greatly impacted on the mainstreamed deaf students in structuring their identity. This in turn supports the general notion that "...[deaf] adolescents must perform up to par with hearing peers in school and in conforming to society's norm" in terms of expectations in having deaf people in the hearing world (Leigh & Stinson, 1991, p. 16). For instance, during mainstreamed high school, the participants identified themselves either through their hearing status or lack thereof or through their personal qualities other than deafness. Max and Kelley identified themselves with their personal attributes, Emily, Christine, and Sabrina focused more on their lack of hearing while Lance and Arthur were focused on their hearing abilities. And yet, for all, deafness played a great role in their lives consciously and unconsciously.

In addition, their perceptions of themselves appear to be different and for some, there is a conflict with their perspectives of other people's perceptions towards themselves. All indicated that other students in their high school knew of them mainly through their deafness and for most participants, through the support services they received.

A critical finding of this section reveals that during high school, the participants

identified themselves as deaf or by their hearing loss status, and yet, there were moments where they appeared to attempt to separate their deafness from their personal and social experiences. This occurred when their experiences, especially the social experiences, were less than rewarding and negative. They would focus more on their personal qualities that were similar to other people in the society. Despite their attempts to remove or separate their deafness from experiences, their deafness was ingrained deeply in their personal and social experiences. Everything they did and do in and with their lives comes with their deaf reality.

Another amazing finding of this present study is while all participants are true experts in terms of their own experiences with their deafness, there were times they were still learning about their deafness and what it meant to them. Also, they have encountered some general myths associated with deafness; for some students the myths were dispelled and for others myths were accepted as reality. For example, Emily grew up with an attitude that speaking is better than sign language. Clearly, this research shows that a deaf person growing up in a hearing family may adopt perceptions and values that the family and the school have towards deafness in general. Later in life, when the participants have learned through education, are more mature and have interacted with other Deaf people, they learn the truth of being Deaf.

In this study, personal and social experiences have emerged as two distinct components of identity; each will be presented separately then will be dealt with as whole.

Personal Identity

The sense of identity or self commences at birth and it extends throughout the human life span (Kamler, 1994; Sprinthall & Collins, 1995). Developing personal identity is critical for individuals to view themselves as distinctive among the human race. In other words, it is a healthy mechanism for human beings to develop a uniqueness rightly their own. Moreover, the sense of identity is multidimensional. Family background, educational experiences and diverse social experiences of the individual affect the sense of self. The extent and the quality of each experience being engaged remains unique to the individual.

In this study, the participants know their personal history which uniquely sets them apart from others. As we can see, the participants' historical background gives a personal sense of who they are. Having the ability to describe and reflect overtly on their past immediately connects them to their personal identity. According to Kamler (1994), when a person identifies with his/her personal history, it becomes a mark of the character self. The participants

genuinely make their own meaning in life which leads them to own the character they say is them. Kamler (1994) stresses that the 'meaning' "...is what a person is willing to do to hold onto a part of himself" (p. 240). The values the participants have influence the sense of expression of themselves. The more they know who they are, the more they do "...whatever it takes to defend...[their] character" (Kamler, 1994, p. 242).

All participants, except for Lance, had hearing parents and grew up with family values which reflected a hearing perspective (e.g., speaking behaviours, listening to music). Not surprisingly, families would like their children with disabilities to develop a primary identification with the able-bodied society (Schowe, 1979; Weinberg & Sterritt, 1986). However, Lance, who had deaf parents, also experienced associations similar to the other participants. This is quite surprising as most literature supported that "...deaf children of deaf parents are superior to deaf children of hearing parents in social-emotional adjustment..." (Moores, 1987, p. 142). The participants had first hand experiences with family and hearing values; they were already familiarized with the societal values.

A most revealing finding is that the participants do not appear to focus as much on their personal qualities in the educational environment; home environment seems to be more important to them. For example, Sabrina and Christine said that they were different people at home than they were at school. At school, they thought more of their deafness and neglected the personal qualities in that environment. Their perception of themselves differed in two different environments. This is also shared by other participants as well. Foster's (1989) study revealed a similar finding on the different perceptions toward deaf people in different worlds, namely, the Deaf world and the hearing world; the perception of the deaf person in the Deaf world showed this person to be more assertive and confident while in the hearing world, this same person appeared to be shy and withdrawn. However, in this study, there were different perceptions of the individuals themselves not between Deaf and hearing worlds but in the hearing world in different environments, home and school. There is no literature available that addresses this finding.

Another startling finding is that most participants appeared to be overly fixed on their deafness, focusing on it far more than any of their personal qualities in the mainstreamed educational environment. This was not by their choice. In classes, being visible through support services and hearing aids, and using sign language or having different communication needs contributed to their intense attention on their deafness. It became more difficult for the

participants to focus on other attractive qualities of their own when their school environment and peers were also fixed on the participants' deafness. The participants had tried to change the deaf image to more of a person image but had failed due to the strong attachment the school had toward disability. This finding has not been discussed nor explored in-depth as far as I know in the literature. Higgins (1990) made his point clearly about people with defects, namely, that these are seen as defects no matter how hard they tried to remove or camouflage the defect.

Social Experiences and Social Identity

As seen in the literature, in this study too, the quality of social experiences among the participants at their mainstreamed high school was mainly negative and in a few cases, positive (see Foster, 1988; Leigh & Stinson, 1991; Mertens, 1989; Stinson & Kluwin, in press). The participants offered a variety of reasons that contributed to unpleasant social experiences such as: deafness, speech difficulties and struggles, wearing hearing aids, and using support services. This perspective appears to be consistent with recent research. Additionally, Kelley, Max, Christine, Emily and Sabrina added another negative influential factor: their hearing peers' condescending attitude toward their deafness. All in all, these factors affected them socially.

Social experiences influence the social identity of the person, and often social experiences make up the essence of the person's identity. Kamler (1994) says, on the topic of social identity, that "...in addition to being defined by how they are distinct from the crowd, people are also defined by how they are part of the crowd. People belong to groups, and sometimes that fact defines who they are" (p. 263). Undoubtedly, the participants defined themselves apart from their hearing peers and yet, they did not have the fair opportunity to be part of the group as equals and thus, their perceptions of themselves may be only based on the definition of being apart from the group. This is interesting in the light of Charlson, Strong and Gold's (1992) study on mainstreamed deaf students in regular schools with other hearing individuals that they are likely to see themselves as "...'deviating from the norm', thus they may be particularly susceptible to psychological ramifications" (p. 261).

All participants had experiences with isolation and rejection from their hearing peers in the classroom, cafeteria, and at school. There were serious repercussions. The participants appeared to think that the hearing students' rejections of them was on the basis of the stigma

attached to their deafness as a stereotypical pathological disability. Subsequent to this, they, especially Sabrina and Max, believed that the hearing students failed to see beyond their deafness and discover a person inside. When the failure on the part of hearing individuals to discover a person became evident, it was excruciating for the participants to accept. Most participants then coped by focusing less on their deafness in the hopes that their inner qualities would be noticed more.

Nobody wants to be different from his/her peers; everyone wants to be accepted by his/her school peers. This is true for mainstreamed deaf students as well. They seek approval from others, especially the peers. The participants commented that their peers had not accepted them fully at the social level. So powerful is their peers' non-acceptance, that as a result, the participants appeared to go through a phase of not accepting themselves and their deafness to some extent. Lance, Arthur, Max, Sabrina, Christine and Emily sensed that their deafness made many people uncomfortable and acknowledged that to overcome the uncomfortableness, they had to downplay their deafness by appearing more "human" which can be interpreted as "hearing". For example, Lance hid his hearing aid by covering it under his hair. Likewise, behaving more like the typical "hearing" person in the hopes of winning the peers' approval reinforces the need to be accepted even under the false pretences. This clearly offset the ease of identity development.

Issues such as communication struggles, visibility, being an outsider, and being different contributed to their social construction of identity. These experiences led them to feel their deafness negatively. As we can see, Lance and Arthur adopted Hearing identity, Max, Sabrina, Christine, and Emily struggled with their deafness. Again, they know a lot about their peers' perception of themselves, mostly in negative terms. Their perception of their peers' view of themselves indicates a contradiction of the view they have of themselves. They viewed themselves as normal human beings, but they felt that others viewed them differently and often they sought to meet the other people's expectations that they were indeed different. They felt that their peers focused too much on the physical differences (e.g., deafness, support services) and forgot the fact that they were human beings similar to them.

The participants were negotiating the meaning of deafness in their hearing environment. They were learning about their deafness and their hearing peers appeared not to be concerned with the social meaning of deafness until they confronted someone who was deaf. This is in agreement with Foster's (1989) findings on the social meaning associated with

deafness. Deaf and hearing people negotiate the social meaning of deafness through interaction. Historically, hearing people tended to view deaf people as deviant or outsiders and often deaf people would assume these roles. However, views are challenged as deaf and hearing people come into contact when deaf students take on more than what was expected of them (Foster, 1989).

While most experiences were negative, there were moments of rewarding experiences as well. It is amazing that they all persevered against the incredible odds through the years of high school. Thus, it strongly indicates that other factors may be responsible for instilling a strong sense of identity among deaf people. Factors such as family support and effective coping strategies may be accountable. This warrants further research.

Some participants (Max, Christine, and Kelley) who had athletic skills were able to participate in extramural sports. Literature has shown that sports is one area where deaf people do feel they are part of the group since they felt they are given the equal opportunity to participate in the event (e.g., Moores, 1987). For Christine, sports in a way replaced her social life and therefore she needed fewer social activities in school. I wonder if the participants would choose sports over social activities if they had the choice and the athletic skills? I was not involved with high school sports at all because of transportation difficulties. It would be interesting to see what it would have been like if I had been involved with sports. Perhaps my life would change again, but this is a speculation.

Lance, Arthur, Kelley, Sabrina, Christine, and Max reported more of a rewarding experience during their last year of high school. Could it be that they were leaving the place behind? Could it be due to maturity, the mastering of coping strategies, or accepting the situation (e.g., I cannot change the world any more)? Or could it be the combination of all the listed reasons above? Nevertheless, these data do suggest that these deaf students in their last year seemed to enjoy high school experiences more. I was thrilled to be graduating from my high school only because I was moving onto another dimension of the world, that I was going to be a student at Gallaudet University.

It is of interest to note that all of the participants knew about the Deaf community but had not interacted with Deaf people until their later years. Apparently, during the schooling years, they appeared not to be interested in pursuing further interaction with them. A question concerning the disinterest of associating with Deaf community is, "What did they see that diminished their interest in interacting with the Deaf community?" Communication skills and

accepting deafness may play a role in participating in the Deaf community. Individuals with a proficiency in ASL and accepting their deafness can more easily interact with Deaf people. However, most participants did not have ASL to begin with and were going through a period of struggling with their deafness. Or, it also can be inferred that they were more interested in identifying with the larger hearing society than with the Deaf community because of several factors such as family and peer identification.

From my experience, I remembered vividly when I was a youngster I asked the teachers of the deaf if there were other deaf people like us out there and they responded to the class that there are people out there who are deaf but were not like us, we are very different from them. They repeatedly stressed the fact that we were intellectually smarter than the other deaf people in residential schools for the deaf. So, I grew up with a boasting attitude that mainstreamed deaf students were better than residential deaf students. Holding this biased view has tainted my overall understanding of deaf people. It was later, after I enrolled at Gallaudet University, that the numerous experiences I had changed my views entirely.

An interesting finding regarding the choices in exploring identity was that a few participants (Lance and Arthur) were not aware of identity options (e.g., belonging to the Deaf or hearing world or both) whereas other participants struggled with their deafness. Arthur was not aware of choices in exploring identity while Max and the others struggled with their deafness. More importantly, all did not know Deaf culture or Deaf identity. This finding is substantiated in literature (Holcomb, 1993; Padden & Humphries, 1988) that mainstreamed deaf students are not aware of Deaf cultural values and principles. Surprisingly, Lance, even though he portrayed the cultural values, had no understanding of Deaf culture which may clearly indicate that his parents may not be knowledgable about it either. This may be unusual in the sense that given what we know about Deaf families, that they are secure in their understanding of cultural values and beliefs. Again, not all Deaf families are aware of Deaf Culture or the importance of sign language mainly due to the lack of education.

Of equal importance was that when some of the participants discovered the Deaf world, they no longer were satisfied with their current position. They were at a crossroads; they needed to make a decision for themselves as to where they would want to proceed further. Upon the reawakening experience of meeting Deaf people, deafness now held a different meaning, more in a positive enhancement context for the participants. Arthur reflected on his experiences and felt that his mainstreaming environment at school did not encourage

him to develop Deaf pride. Again, there is a need for schools to be aware of and be sensitive to facilitating an environment where all individuals reach their potentials in terms of their identity.

Kelley and Emily both stressed the importance of having other Deaf people around during and outside of school. It is where they learn the rewarding experience of being Deaf: Deaf pride. Some saw the benefits of being Deaf such as using sign language. More and more people are fascinated with sign language and are interested in learning it. This resulted in a positive change. Some of the participants were beginning to be empowered with dignity. For Max, this happened when he realized that he would not want to cure his deafness. This is probably the truest form of acceptance regarding deafness.

It would be interesting to see Glickman and Carey's (1993) model on Deaf identity (from Chapter Two) being used with these participants in determining their identity. Further research is needed.

Role Models Selection

It is of utmost importance that youngsters have role models. The literature suggests that role models serve useful purposes in the individual's life in different ways (Head, Long, & Stern, 1991). In this study, all participants excluding Lance spoke of role models whom they admired. The role models they chose were important people they knew personally and most were their parents. It is heartening to see that they value and respect their parents highly. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that all models they chose were hearing with one exception: Emily had role models who were hearing and Deaf.

Several possible reasons may dictate their choices. One is that being in the mainstreamed educational environment, the only available people they see are usually hearing people. Their families are hearing as well. Naturally, they would choose someone from the environment they are in. Secondly, the infrequent contacts with the Deaf community may put them at a disadvantage in that they may think that Deaf people are not good choices for role models. Subsequent to that is the society's stereotypical beliefs about disabled people. They may not want to select someone who is disabled, further reinforcing their disabilities. Lastly, having Deaf role models is a relatively new concept which may not have hit the mainstreaming market yet.

It is impossible to determine whether choosing a role model helped to bring about

more positive outcomes or whether the participants were experiencing better social, academic, personal and family interactions. Nonetheless, the data do suggest that the individuals appear to choose role models whom they want to identify with and they learn important things from them. On the other hand, Lance said he grew up with no role models. One cannot speculate the reasons why but it may indicate that Lance had no one to admire or to relate to. How many other mainstreamed deaf youngsters like Lance are growing up with no role models?

It is heartening to see some of the participants considering themselves a role model to other deaf people and to hearing people as well. They are interested in making a difference in the lives of other people.

Revisiting the Participants Today

University experiences appear to have enhanced the participants' acceptance of themselves and yet, they are also at a new crossroads, both personally and socially, where they are once again negotiating the meaning of deafness in the society they live in. The identity process is not static as we have seen here. The journey continues its saga as the participants acquire new experiences in their lives.

It is interesting that now the participants see themselves as whole, that they are, indeed, people. All appear to accept their deafness more readily and accept the fact that it is a permanent thing which will never change. All appreciate the advantages of living in both worlds, hearing and Deaf. All continue to seek the higher truths of themselves and at the same time, educate the public about the reality of their deafness.

My Personal Reflections on the Study

Doing the interviews with the participants has further enhanced my understanding of deafness. I think we all were learning from each other during the interviews. I have several comments that I want to share here based on my personal experience and understanding in collaboration with the participants'.

After hearing the participants' perceptions of themselves, I also reflected on my perception of myself and I have found that in each interview a part of myself was being described when the participants' described their perceptions. In the back of my mind, during

the interviews, I said to myself, "Yes, that is me you are describing here" or "That is exactly what I felt when this happened." But I did not share or elaborate my thoughts with the participants; this was difficult not to do.

I have often wondered if my presence has influenced the participants' quality of sharing their stories with me. Without any doubts, my being deaf and Deaf and the experiences I had gave me the understanding and the appreciation of the phenomenal experiences the participants engaged themselves. I felt they have shared their experiences quite openly and honestly and one would ask: would they do the same for researchers who are not deaf? That remains to be seen.

I have often pondered on the question as to whether I see myself as a person first or as Deaf person first? Sometimes, I feel it depends on the sociocultural context I am in which may influence my views of myself. For example, in an all Deaf environment, I see myself as a person first, and in other situations where there are hearing people, I see myself as a Deaf person and in another situation where there are men, I view my femaleness first. Again, it is clear that the sociocultural context has a role in defining ourselves. It would be of great interest to investigate the extent to which the sociocultural context influences the process of self-identification of a person.

I had a feeling that some of the participants were concerned about embellishing "deafness" positively. For instance, Sabrina took on a responsibility for making deaf people "look good" in the eyes of the hearing people. The act is virtuous, and yet, to be crippled with the responsibility of embellishing all deaf people positively is an emotionally draining experience. Again, this refers to the need for better treatment towards deaf people in general. Furthermore, the public needs to be aware and be reminded that the Deaf community is heterogeneous, just as the general society is. They are not to be judged as a group. Often, I have experienced situations where the public reacted differently after they learned that deaf people are indeed different people, and are different from other deaf people as well. This further reinforces the idea that the society has wrongly lumped all deaf people into one group: disabled people who cannot hear, and appear to have similar personality.

It is important to note that when the participants shared their stories about their experiences identity-wise in the mainstreamed educational setting, they often referred to their classmates as peers. The generic label "peer" is a misnomer because in actuality, peers are seen as equal people. In the case in this present study, does the name "peer" do justice when the

participants are not seen as equals in the educational domain?

It is not a surprising fact that we are constantly evolving identity-wise today, recreating, restructuring, and redefining ourselves. The participants at the university level continue the quest of searching themselves. I am too. I am not only searching for myself, but I want to feel comfortable about who I am and to love who I am. It is a challenge for me and for all people.

Recommendations

Seven participants were recruited to share their perspectives of their identity in the hopes of having readers gain invaluable insights to their experiences. They have a lot to offer to various people working with mainstreamed deaf people. The following highlights their practical advice and suggestions to public, professionals, parents and mainstreamed deaf students. My personal recommendations are included for further suggestions.

The Participants' Recommendations

Professionals and Educators

Professional development: Learning about deafness.

- Facilitate and promote communication in class and outside of class among students (Max, Lance, Christine, Sabrina);
- Create Deaf awareness day (Max);
- Accept, foster, respect and appreciate the differences among individuals (Sabrina, Kelley, Emily, Max).

Participation.

- Encourage deaf students to be involved in the class if there is group discussion (Kelley).

Services.

- Have knowledge on how the support services (e.g., FM system) work (Christine);

Mainstreaming experiences.

- Encourage the deaf student to make contacts with other deaf students outside of school if they are the only students in the school (Emily);
- Be aware that not every deaf student will have success with mainstreaming (Kelley);

• Be sensitive to deaf students' mainstreaming experiences (Emily).

Deaf and hard of hearing role models.

• Encourage the employment of Deaf and hard of hearing professionals and educators in mainstreamed environments (Arthur).

Public

Public services.

• Be aware about deafness and the implications it has in the lives of deaf and Deaf people (Emily);

• Be sensitive to the needs of deaf people (Emily);

• Make concerted efforts to break the stereotypical myths associated with deafness and with disabilities in general (Max, Emily).

Parents

Support.

• Encourage and support the identity process your adolescent undergoes (Max, Lance);

• Be careful of the amount of support you give to your daughter or son; identity will be lost if there is too much support (Arthur);

• Let the adolescent be him/herself and assist the process of discovering him/herself (Arthur);

• Have open communication between you and the adolescent (Max);

• Make sure there is a qualified interpreter there for the isolated mainstreamed student (Arthur);

• Contact the Deaf community and ask them what would be best for your son or daughter. Deaf people are more than willing to share their experiences. Listen and learn from their advice (Arthur);

• Give the same treatment to your children, both deaf and hearing (Sabrina).

Mainstreamed Deaf Students

Academic experiences.

• Develop and maintain good study habits and school related skills (Lance);

• Ask for help among classmates and teachers (Kelley).

Social experiences.

• Try to participate in different activities, sports and extracurricular activities for gaining social experiences (Kelley, Max, Emily);

• Get in touch with Deaf adults, they have opportunities for kids to participate in, to get involved. We are there to help the kids, to talk with them (Arthur, Kelley, Emily);

• Use effective coping strategies to deal with negativism (Kelley).

Identity development.

• Learn who you are and be comfortable with it (Max, Sabrina, Emily);

• Accept your deaf reality and view it positively (Lance, Emily, Arthur);

• Encourage oneself to be true to him/herself (Arthur).

Other practical advice from mainstreamed deaf individuals.

• "Try not to let your deafness get in the way of your enjoyment of all aspects of life; challenges, social life, etc. Be who you are, and don't allow your minuscule disorder to define you as a person" (Sabrina);

• "Try not to accept any negative suggestions from teachers, kids, like, 'oh you're deaf, you can't do that'. Ignore that. I want them to [be involved with things they are interested in], if they like golf, then play and compete on the team. Try your best to be on the team. Don't let other people say pityingly, 'oh, you're alone, oh, you have no friends, oh, why don't you be my friend and have a drink', and so on. Those are negative things, do things that makes you feel good about yourself. You try to set up your ladder, [the] steps to reach your goal and enjoy yourself that way and feel good" (Christine).

My Personal Recommendations

My suggestions and recommendations include both short and long term goals. As a direct result of this research, the first priority will be share the findings with other mainstreamed deaf students so that they will realize that they are not alone in their social experiences and search for identity. For example, frustration and issues regarding communication difficulties may be very common to most young deaf students. In the school environment itself, both hearing and Deaf people in the professional and Deaf community need to be aware of the needs of deaf students who are mainstreamed. They can work together as a team to assist the deaf students with their experiences in a positive way and to promote a

positive view of deafness. It will be of critical importance to recruit Deaf role models and friends of the Deaf community to talk about deafness, Deaf culture, and values. The remaining recommendations are important, however, they require long-term commitment on the behalf of the school, professionals, educators, parents, students and the community.

Professionals and Educators

- Recognize that people with varying degrees of hearing loss will experience difficulties in mainstreaming;
- Have knowledge about deafness, Deaf culture, and cultural values;
- Encourage all students to develop sensitivity to deafness;
- Focus on the students' abilities, not disabilities;
- Be equipped to deal with frustrations a deaf student may have toward mainstreaming experiences;
- Provide services that will encourage full integration in the academic and social dimension of mainstreamings;
- Be aware of the possible negative impact of these services for the deaf students;
- Create an environment in which everyone feels special and worthy to participate;
- Recruit Deaf and hard of hearing role models in schools to work with deaf students.

Mainstreamed Deaf Students

- Know and state your needs in order to receive support services;
- Be comfortable with the support services;
- Be kind to yourself when things are not going the way you wanted;
- Focus on your personal and social qualities;
- Recognize that finding oneself is a process, and changes occur.

Deaf Community

- Provide different social activities and include mainstreamed deaf adolescents;
- Be role models to mainstreamed deaf students.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further investigation is needed to explore the first hand experiences of deaf individuals on identity. The following research questions have emerged from this study.

- What are the current experiences/perceptions of university/college students with hearing losses related to their identity?

- Do students from residential schools for the deaf and students from mainstreamed settings have the same or different outlooks on their identity development?

- Is there a different outlook on the gender issue in deafness? Do males with hearing loss have different perspectives on identity than do females?

- What are the views of identity development as seen with hard of hearing students and with deaf students?

- Do Deaf children from Deaf families know their identity? What about those with Deaf families who went to a mainstreamed school?

- What circumstances/points influence deaf individuals to change their identity? Do they really change it?

- Compare the differences and similarities in identity milestones among deaf adolescents, deaf adults, and deaf seniors.

- Do deaf students with siblings have a more pronounced identity development than those without siblings?

- What are the statistics of deaf students in Canada receiving special educational services in mainstreamed schools?

In conclusion, the goal of this research was to describe the perspectives of identity in mainstreamed deaf students. The data collected have revealed some new and fascinating findings, and the participants have provided further understanding on identity. As a result of this investigation, the young deaf adults were given the opportunity to have their voices heard, as they were often not given the chance to share their perspectives and understandings of their identity in the past. It is hoped upon reading this research that deaf individuals will not only gain a clearer understanding of identity choices and process, but will also appreciate and value their uniqueness.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM
Agreement to Participate in the Project
"Perceptions of Identity Experiences"

I, _____, do consent to participate in the thesis study "Mainstreamed Deaf Adolescents and Their Identity".

I understand that the purpose of the project is to help professionals, parents, and educators in the field of deaf education understand my experiences.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating any time during the project without prejudice.

I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality at all times. All information will be kept private. My name, school, place, and any identifying information will be changed.

I understand that a professional and ethically-bound interpreter will be transcribing the videotapes to print.

I understand that the researcher, the interpreter, and the thesis supervisor are the only ones who will see the interview data.

I accept and approve that the information from the interview will be used for the thesis under study and any publications that may result.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO OUT OF TOWN PARTICIPANTS

Dear _____,

Re: Interview transcript on your high school experiences relating to identity

Thank you so much for your participation in my study. The information you have shared is wonderful and interesting!

We have spoken before in person about the interview transcript. Enclosed is a copy of your interview transcript. I would like you to read it through first before you do anything else. Now, after reading your transcript, if there is a mistake on what you have said or something that needs to be clarified, please make the changes and include your reasons why. Then mail me the "revised" copy as soon as you can.

It is important that the style of English be left as is. I want the English to be in a conversational form. If you are unsure about that, please contact me at the number below.

If you find the transcript accurate and correct as to what you have shared with me during the interview, then you do not need to send it back. If I do not receive the revised copy at the end of this month, then that would mean you have agreed to accept the transcript as is and that the transcript has met to your satisfaction.

For further information or clarification, you may contact me at (*phone number*) (TTY or FAX). Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Shelley Roy

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLES OF QUOTES, PARAPHRASING, AND TAGGING

Quotes	Paraphrases	Tags
Emily: I don't belong in the deaf world, I don't belong in the hearing, where do I fit? My friend, Ashley Simeon and I discussed that a lot. We would say it was like walking on a knife's edge. One mistake, you slip, and you get cut badly by someone on either side. Someone always pointing their finger at you. If you say something about deaf, hearing are mad at you, if you say about hearing, deaf are mad at you. I was stuck in the middle.	Does not belong to either world: hearing and Deaf.	Identity Awareness
Lance: Hold on, you don't understand. I never told to people that I had a Hearing identity, it's what I thought to myself. I thought I was like a hearing person during school and that I became a Hearing person during school, but no one ever asked me about that.	Did not tell people his identity of a hearing person, only that he kept it to himself.	Hearing Identity: Keeping to himself.
Sabrina: And that made me feel like an alien, you know, an alien. I understand people, a lot of people were friendly to me but I see that they couldn't see past my deafness to see the person inside me. That's how I see it but right now they were not really interested, because they, you know, didn't do that with other people.	Perceived herself as an alien. Felt that people could not see beyond her deafness.	Perception of Self

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES OF CLUSTERING

Below are the examples of some clusters and the tagged meaning units that comprise each theme.

I. E., **THEMES**: (HIGHER ORDER)
- ☛ Clustered groups
  - • *tagged meaning units*

1. **THOUGHTS ON IDENTITY**
- ☛ Definitions on Identity
  - • *general definition*
  - • *Deaf identity definition*
  - • *Hearing identity definition*
  - • *labelling*
  - • *Not aware of identity*

2. **PERCEPTIONS OF SELF**
- ☛ Perceptions of Self
  - • *individuality*
  - • *list of identity features*
  - • *comfort level*
  - • *personal history*
  - • *values*
  - • *personal identity*
  - • *past-time activities*

- ☛ Social Experiences
  - • *social rejection*
  - • *nonverbal communication*
  - • *limited interaction*
  - • *positive social experience*
  - • *lack of participation with peers*
  - • *visibleness*
  - • *outsider*
  - • *negative social experience*
  - • *communication barrier*
  - • *social belonginess*

3. **DEAFNESS AS A PART OF SELF**
- ☛Experiences in Being Deaf
  - • *deaf perspective*
  - • *deaf contact: important*
  - • *hands for communication*

- *identifying with deaf people*
- *shared experiences*
- *last to know*
- *awareness*
- *mind and body connection: Deaf world*
- *immersion in Deaf world*
- *social flexibility*
- *visual accessibility*
- *acceptance in being deaf*
- *proud of being deaf*
- *awareness of deaf community*
- *a convenience*
- *a place in the Deaf world*
- *Deaf culture*
- *deafness as negatively different*
- *attention toward deafness*

4. **COPING STRATEGIES**

☞Coping Skills

- *peer communication*
- *social view*
- *coping*
- *building self-esteem*
- *oralism equals equality*
- *stressful situation*
- *certain needs*
- *less tolerance*
- *identity struggles*
- *school frustrations*
- *independence: no support services*
- *written communication*
- *lack of communication*

5. **ROLE MODELS**

☞ Important People: Role Models

- *no role model*
- *role model: names*
- *characteristics of role model*
- *identifying with role model*